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Our reference:
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Date: Wednesday, 25 March 2026

To all Members of the Communities Scrutiny Group

Dear Councillor

A Meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Group will be held on Thursday, 2 April 2026 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>
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Yours sincerely



Sara Pregon
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
[Link to further information in the Council's Constitution](#)
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 January 2026 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Carbon Management Plan Update (Pages 9 - 18)
5. West Bridgford Contact Point (Pages 19 - 28)



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Membership

Chair: Councillor H Parekh

Vice-Chair: Councillor L Plant

Councillors: M Barney, J Billin, R Butler, C Grocock, D Mason, P Matthews and A Phillips

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**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY GROUP
THURSDAY, 22 JANUARY 2026**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West
Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors H Parekh (Chair), L Plant (Vice-Chair), R Butler, C Grocock, R Mallender, D Mason, P Matthews, J Cottee (as substitute) and A Phillips (as substitute)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Home Office Representative
Serco Representative
Councillor R Upton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
D Burch	Assistant Director of Environment and Communities
G Carpenter	Assistant Director of Public Protection
S Brannan	Assistant Director of Planning
J Bate	Team Manager – Monitoring and Implementation
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors M Barney and J Billin

9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 October 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2025 were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Chair.

The Chair advised and the Group noted a change in the order of the items on the agenda, with the Work Programme to be discussed before the Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation item.

11 Work Programme

The Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods presented the Work Programme and outlined the upcoming scrutiny items. The Group noted that the scheduling of bringing the Review of Debt Collection Agents by RBC report to scrutiny was subject to possible Government changes.

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

2 April 2026

- Carbon Management Plan Update
- West Bridgford Contact Point
- Work Programme

xx October 2026

- Review of debt collection agents by RBC in line with the outcome of the Government's consultation on Council Tax and Enforcement
- Work Programme

12 Exclusion of the Public

It was resolved that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

13 Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation including HMOs

The Assistant Director for Public Protection introduced the Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation including HMOs report which was the result of a scrutiny request submitted by Councillor Phillips. He explained that prior to the adoption of the asylum dispersal model there had been a contingency hotel located within the Borough near Whatton, which had housed, on average, over 60 individuals, with officers concerned about the safety of those residents given the highly rural location in which the hotel was located. He confirmed that that had now closed. He said that as of April 2022 the Government had introduced a full dispersal model, with the Borough currently having 7 properties located within it as part of this scheme, five situated in West Bridgford, one in Cotgrave and one in Radcliffe on Trent, with the majority being HMOs, which meant that they were over three stories or accommodated more than five people and which were an important part of the national housing market.

The Home Office representative explained that the Home Office had a legal obligation to accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute whilst their asylum application was being considered as part of the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999. The Home Office representative said that dispersal areas (DA) had always been a significant part of how the Home Office had undertaken that legal obligation and played a significant role in how asylum seekers were accommodated in a diffused and dispersed way through communities.

The Home Office representative said that the Home Office had initially adopted a policy of voluntary dispersal which had worked well when the asylum population had been at a lower level. However, as the asylum population

increased it had become unfeasible for a small number of local authorities to accommodate the greater number of asylum seekers. In light of this, in 2022 the Home Office moved to adopt a policy of full dispersal, where rather than local authorities volunteering to be dispersal areas, every area became a potential dispersal area. The Home Office representative said that to ensure that full dispersal was undertaken in a structured and considered manner, targets were introduced and in 2023 Regional Allocation Plans (RAPs) introduced a target requiring 100,000 bed spaces across the Country. Through a process of informal negotiation with Strategic Migration Partnerships, local authorities and providers for the Home Office, each local authority was given a notional target for their area.

The Home Office representative noted that the targets had not necessarily been well evidenced and feedback received from various agencies led to the Home Office, in collaboration with other government departments, and in conjunction with the LGA, developing Asylum Accommodation Plans (AAPs) which provided evidence-based delivery plans underpinned by an index model. The Home Office representative said that the indexing took account of a range of factors, including local homeless population levels, availability of schools, dentists and GPs, and other local authority resettlement schemes, with information being continuously refreshed. The aim of which was to create targets which accounted for the various pressures faced by individual local authorities, with those targets called Service User Demand Plans (SUDPs). The Home Office representative added, however, that a significant factor influencing allocations was the total national number of asylum seekers requiring accommodation.

In relation to accommodation, the Home Office representative said that this was procured by the Home Office's accommodation providers, with the procurement process underpinned by a robust adjudication process, with consultation taking place for every property procured in every local authority. The Home Office representative explained that when the accommodation provider identified a potential property, nominated local authority officials were notified and asked to input their local expertise and knowledge as to whether the property was suitable. If there was disagreement as to whether or not a property was appropriate, there was an escalation and adjudication process whereby the Home Office would objectively make the decision.

The Group was informed that AAPs were regularly reviewed and refreshed and monitored via monthly government forums, with local officials invited to attend, and which provided an opportunity for concerns and issues to be raised.

The Serco Representative confirmed that Serco was the accommodation provider for the Home Office for Northwest Midlands and East of England and said that it was working on moving away from using asylum contingency hotels towards delivering the asylum full dispersal model alongside the Home Office. The Serco Representative said that Serco attended a variety of Government and multi-agency forums to support delivery and consulted with local authorities on all properties. The Group was informed that Serco had received feedback from local authorities advising that the information Serco had previously shared with them about properties had not been granular enough for them to provide informed feedback, so as of July 2025, Serco had changed to

undertaking an individual property consultation process with the local authority before progressing with any property. If there was any impasse regarding a particular property, then there was an adjudication process which could be used.

In relation to identification of properties, the Serco Representative informed that Serco was looking for a range of different accommodation types and noted that currently most within Rushcliffe were HMOs. He explained that Serco did not buy properties but rather rented them and said that whilst there had been concerns about this distorting the property markets, he said that Serco did not look to inflate rental prices but offered normal rental rates. He said that property standards were compliant with contractual requirements and local authority standards, with properties subject to monthly inspections, and local authority and home office inspections, with asylum seekers able to report defects themselves through the agreed mechanisms.

Councillor Phillips explained that he had submitted this scrutiny request after learning that a planning application in his ward had been submitted to convert a six bed HMO into a seven bed HMOs. He said that the original six bed HMO conversion had taken place through permitted development and he had not been notified as Ward Councillor and so was unaware that it had happened. He questioned why the Council had allowed the previous four bed family home on a quiet cul-de-sac to be converted to house six single male asylum seekers without consulting the Ward Councillor.

Councillor Phillips said that he had been contacted by concerned residents and made aware of the ongoing issues coming from this property, with many anti-social behaviour, littering and noise complaints having been raised with the Council and Serco. Councillor Phillips thought that the Council needed to be in a position to protect its residents and have more control over who was placed where, with the accommodation needing not just to be safe for asylum seekers, but also for residents. He thought that an Article 4 directive was required to give the Council control, to stop permitted development rights for family home conversions into HMOs, so that they would be properly assessed through the planning application process. He said that the Council needed to have robust measures in place to stop an influx of inappropriate houses being used by Serco as HMOs.

Councillor Phillips said that asylum dispersal and contingency accommodation, including HMOs, was one of the most emotive topics in the Country at the moment and thought that the Council and Councillors needed to be in a position of knowledge to understand and scrutinise the system and adopt the tools to deal with it.

Councillor Matthews asked whether the Home Office or Serco kept records of complaints received for each of the properties. He asked whether any form of risk assessment was conducted in relation to who was placed in properties and whether there was assessment as to whether a tenancy or tenant was suitable for a property in any given area and what was in place in terms of support and supervision for properties.

The Serco representative confirmed that Serco did keep records of concerns

raised with them and that feedback was also shared with them through a range of channels, including partnership agencies or local authorities, and that there was also a feedback mechanism available online. In relation to individual placements, he said that conduct was managed through various methods, including direct engagement with asylum seekers, often offering education as a first approach, for example explaining the impact of noise for example on local neighbours, followed by a warning letter if behaviour did not improve and ultimately reporting it through to the Home Office compliance team. The Serco representative added that they would also engage with the local authority, for example, to assist with noise monitoring. Any criminal behaviour would be reported to the police. He said Serco would also consider whether it was necessary for an individual to be relocated if there were, for example, concerns about personal safety or conflict with neighbours. In relation to risk assessments, the Serco representative said that risk assessments were carried out by Serco and local authority Officers but noted that full information may not be known about individuals arriving from abroad to make fully informed decisions in all circumstances.

The Serco representative said that if neighbours raised concerns with Housing Officers visiting properties, those concerns would be responded to as appropriate on a case-by-case basis, but he was not able to confirm how many complaints had been raised for specific properties in Rushcliffe.

Councillor Butler asked about Home Office consultation with the local authority and whether the Council's enforcement or complaint history for a property or nearby properties was taken into consideration. The Home Office representative explained that the consideration process was multi-faceted taking account of a variety of factors, including social cohesion and any contentious issues. The Home Office representative explained that on identifying a potential property the provider would issue a notification to the nominated local authority officials who would provide feedback. She stressed that local authority information was part of the decision making process and that the safety of asylum seekers and the community was important to the Home Office. The Home Office representative added that the type of accommodation required was determined by the demand, that procurement needed to align with what was required.

In response to a question from Councillor Butler in relation to complaints, the Home Office representative said that there were contractual mechanisms in place to determine the thresholds for levels of complaints, with the provider flagging more serious complaints with the Home Office, whilst noting the difference between what would be considered a high profile incident versus what would be a local or operational incident. The Serco representative added that complaints were reviewed on a case-by-case basis based on the specific aspects of each one, taking account of partnership information and feedback to make informed decisions.

The Director for Neighbourhoods confirmed that the Council held information about complaints in relation to properties in the Borough. He noted that the Council had provided feedback to Serco regarding proposed properties in the local area, which had been taken on board in their decision making processes.

Councillor Grocock thought that the current system was better than previously but that it still seemed reactive and asked how much influence local knowledge and feedback had in respect of properties coming forward. The Director for Neighbourhoods said that the process was driven by Serco who were looking for properties but thought that the Council's feedback had been taken into account locally.

Councillor Matthews asked whether there was any funding available to support local services, such as GPs and pharmacies, in meeting the increased demand. The Home Office representative said that grant funding was available for asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation and agreed to provide links for publicly available information ([Funding Instruction for Local Authorities: Asylum Grant 2025 - 2026 - GOV.UK](#)). She said that local authorities received a recognition payment every financial year which was not ringfenced. The Director for Neighbourhoods confirmed that information about Rushcliffe's funding was contained within the agenda report and said that the Council had used it to procure a dispersal accommodation outreach worker who visited the properties and supported asylum seekers with their needs and social integration including connecting them with local community and voluntary groups.

The Chair asked about asylum dispersal funding received by the Council in 2024/25 and what activities it supported, whether it fully covered the Council's asylum dispersal costs. The Assistant Director for Public Protection explained that the £38k grant funding had been used to fund a range of services, including tackling anti-social behaviour, community initiatives, wellbeing services, interpreting, signposting and orientation and general administration of the scheme. He added that in general the funding received broadly covered the cost of the Council's activity.

Councillor Matthews referred to Serco having responsibility to support asylum seekers with access to local service providers and asked about measures to ensure that local services weren't overstretched and any funding available for those services. The Serco representative said that they did not provide funding directly and said that impact on local services was something that was taken into consideration as part of the indexing tool to inform how many people should be placed in specific areas. He said that Serco attended multiagency forums with local service providers to discuss issues and took onboard feedback from providers, particularly GP practices. The Home Office representative acknowledged that there were often structural issues impacting on service delivery irrespective of asylum seeker impacts and added that asylum seekers did not get preferential treatment.

Councillor Plant asked whether asylum seekers had tenancy agreements with Serco and how long, on average, Serco would rent a property for. She referred to funding to support asylum seekers and thought that it should be ringfenced and asked how the Council spent its funding. She asked for more information about the work of the Outreach worker contracted by the Council.

The Serco representative said that they had rental contracts for the property owners which could last until the end of the 2029 but which did not prevent Serco from moving away from a property if there were issues with it. In relation

to asylum seekers, Serco signed tenancy agreements with them, with a copy given to the asylum seeker following completion of their induction. The Serco representative said that asylum seekers had a point of contact through their Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Contract (AIRE) provider who could support them with a range of enquiries, including completion of forms, financial assistance applications and complaints and whose details were regularly advertised. AIRE operated remotely and were accessible via web chat, email, or telephone and offered translation services. The Serco representative added that Serco also had housing officers who were allocated to patches of properties who would log complaints about issues which would be dealt with through the stipulated mechanisms. The Home Office representative confirmed that they also regularly received data from AIRE providers which was monitored for any escalating matters.

The Director for Neighbourhoods explained that the Council worked with Notts Refugee Forum locally and had procured the service (Outreach Worker) through them and had also collaborated with the local library to allow them to meet and access support there.

Councillor Phillips asked what types and number of complaints would need to be received before withdrawal from a property would be considered. He referred also to the potential financial impact on a property owner if a rental agreement was broken. The Serco representative said that consideration of complaints would be on a case-by-case basis, based on an investigation of the specifics of that situation and property. Whilst commercial elements of property agreements could not be discussed, the Serco representative said that property owner may have opportunity to secure alternative rental options should the Serco agreement cease.

Councillor R Mallender asked how long people typically spent in accommodation or as an asylum seeker. The Home Office representative agreed to provide published figures ([Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-data-tables)) and said that the Home Office was working through the backlog and new applications as quickly as it could and was aware of the impacts on asylum seekers and local communities.

The Chair asked whether any statutory powers were triggered and what information was requested by the Home Office when the Council received notification of potential dispersal properties in the Borough. The Assistant Director for Public Protection explained that under the latest Home Office policy the Council had five days to respond to a notification from Serco, with set parameters as to how it needed to respond and as part of that it would gather information from relevant organisations, including the police and local Members. He also explained that when a notification was received by the Council Officers would make every effort to notify the local ward Member. The Director for Neighbourhoods said that it was the responsibility of Serco to ensure that it complied with any relevant legislation and any necessary planning and housing standards.

The Chair referred to selected licensing of HMOs and the Director for Neighbourhoods said that the Council did not currently consider selective licensing to be an appropriate tool to manage HMOs in the Borough but said

that it may be more appropriate in areas with a greater number of HMOs as a tool to improve the standards of their HMOs. He said that the Council would keep this under review but noted that a trigger had to be reached before a case could be made to the Secretary of State.

The Chair asked what steps the Council could take to ensure planning oversight, including whether properties should require planning permission, or whether an Article 4 directive could be introduced to control family home conversions. The Assistant Director for Planning explained that planning permission was required for conversions to house seven or more occupants with anything less coming under permitted development. She referred to Article 4 directions which could be used for situations like this and others such as for conservation aspects and noted that there were strict legal requirements which a Council had to evidence before they could be introduced. She confirmed that a report would be taken to Cabinet in relation to this matter. In relation to hostel accommodation, the Team Manager for Monitoring and Implementation said that the Council was looking into whether some HMOs may be classified as hostels and how this would impact permitted development for HMOs, but that there was little case law as to what constituted a hostel. The Team Manager for Monitoring and Implementation took the Group through some specific case law outcomes and noted a possible difference was that hostels may have shared bedrooms but that HMOs usually did not. The Chair asked that the Council continue to look into this area of enquiry.

The Chair thanked Officers and Home Office and Serco representatives for their attendance and input into the meeting.

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

- a) scrutinised the content of this report, and
- b) provided feedback to the representatives of the Home Office and Serco on the application of government asylum dispersal policy within Rushcliffe.

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm.

CHAIR



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 2 April 2026

Carbon Management Action Plan Review

Report of the Director – Neighbourhoods

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. On 10 March 2020, Cabinet agreed a target to become carbon neutral by 2030 from the Council's direct operations and adopted a Carbon Management Action Plan to monitor progress against the target. The Carbon Management Action Plan is a working document and is scrutinised annually by the Communities Scrutiny Group, most recently in April 2025.
- 1.2. The Communities Scrutiny Group is requested to consider progress to date for the year 2026-27 financial year and, if satisfied, accept the recommendation of the report.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Group notes the progress to date of the adopted carbon management action plan and priority projects for the forthcoming financial year 2026/27.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. In December 2021, Cabinet adopted the Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030. The Strategy reaffirmed the Council's commitment to be carbon neutral for the Council's operations by 2030 but also included a confirmation of its commitment to be "Net Zero" as a Borough by 2050 in line with national government targets. The wording of the Strategy was also strengthened to recognise the ecological crisis.
- 3.2. The Carbon Management Action Plan (CMAP) sets out how the Council will seek to drive carbon behaviour change through its policy and regulation work along with acting in a leadership capacity to positively influence residents and businesses across the Borough.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. The UK Committee on Climate Change states: "There is a crucial role for local authorities in reducing emissions to meet national carbon budgets", and: "the focus of a local authority low-carbon plan should be emission drivers over which they have significant influence. In particular, residential, and non-residential buildings, surface transport, waste, and own estate".

- 4.2. Greenhouse gas emissions are categorised into three groups or 'scopes' by the most widely used international accounting tool, the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol.

Scope 1 – All Direct Emissions from the activities of an organisation or under their control. Including fuel combustion on site such as gas boilers, fleet vehicles and air-conditioning leaks.

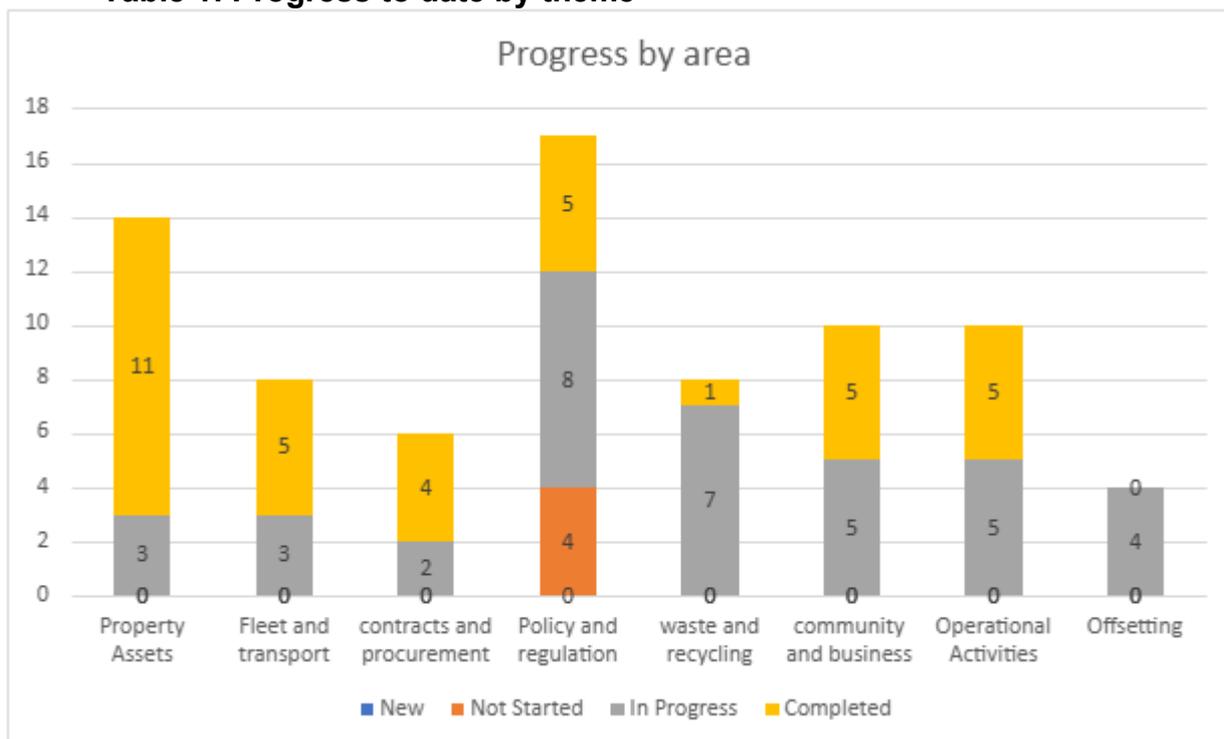
Scope 2 – Indirect Emissions from electricity purchased and used by the organisation. Emissions are created during the production of the energy and eventually used by the organisation.

Scope 3 – All Other Indirect Emissions from activities of the organisation, occurring from sources that they do not own or control. These are usually the greatest share of the carbon footprint, covering emissions associated with business travel, procurement, waste and water, staff commuting, business travel, RBC's leased properties, staff working from home.

Carbon Management Action Plan

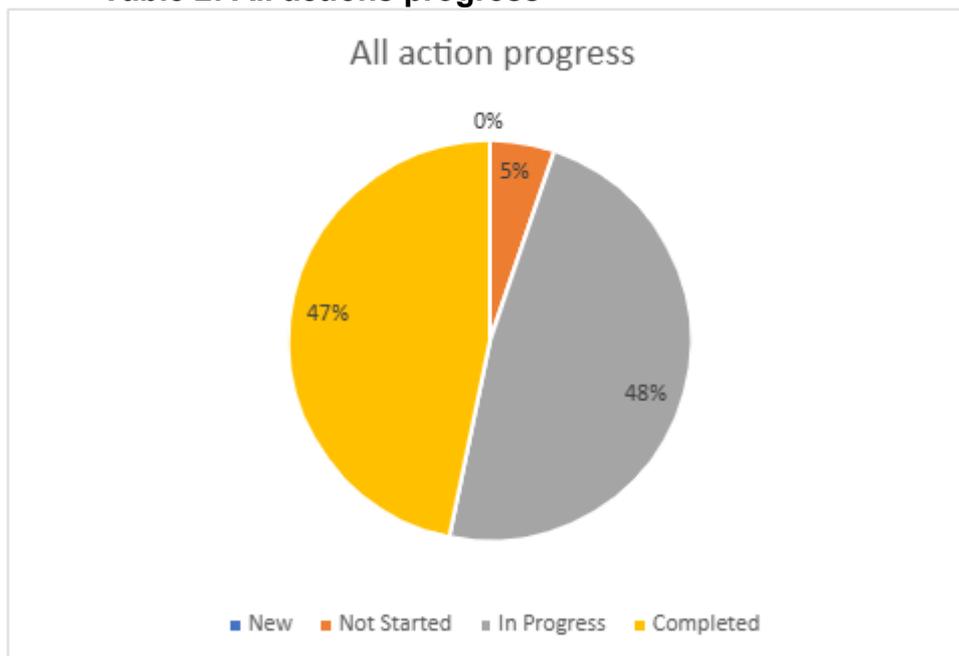
- 4.3. Overall, the latest data for gas and electric Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions provide evidence that the Council continues to make excellent progress against the original 2008/09 baseline with a carbon reduction of 71% for 2025/26 when compared to the 2008/09 baseline.
- 4.4. The significant reductions observed in the 2024/25 financial year have primarily been achieved by the implementation of the heavy bin lorry fleet switching from diesel to Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil fuel (HVO), the transition to Electric Vehicles (EV) as part of our vehicle replacement programme and the electrification of the Bingham Depot. The completion of the leisure centre Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme at Cotgrave Leisure Centre along with similar work at Sir Julian Cahn and Gamston Community Hall will be reflected in the 2025/26 financial year carbon figures expected to be released end of April 2026.
- 4.5. There were 67 actions in the first iteration of the CMAP. These were spread across eight key theme areas: property assets, fleet and transport, contracts and procurement, policy and regulation, waste and recycling, operation activity, community and business, and offsetting. Since the last review, overall actions have decreased to 77 from 90, due to the Climate Action Plan review and the completion of projects.
- 4.6. The CMAP is a live document which is regularly updated. The current plan has 37 live actions, 0 new, 4 not started, 36 completed actions, Table 1 overleaf shows the progress to date by theme.

Table 1: Progress to date by theme



4.7. In this reporting period, the completed actions are the replacement of the Gamston Community Hall and Sir Julien Cahn boilers to air source heat pumps from traditional gas systems, the commencement of the EV charge stations at Bridgeford Road/Nursery Car park projects and also the completion of the Heating Upgrade Grant 2 scheme. There have also been longer term actions removed such as running a youth climate change parliament, due to Local Government Reorganisation.

Table 2: All actions progress



2030 Own Operations Net Zero Target

- 4.8. The completed projects for 2025/26 have contributed significantly to the reduction of CO₂e by 800T CO₂e (see Appendix 1). This is an excellent achievement but also highlights the importance of focusing efforts to deliver the last measures needed to get the net 0 by 2030 target.
- 4.9. The priority projects identified for delivery during the 2026/27 financial year are the Rushcliffe Arena Solar Project, Gresham Sports Park solar project and the Edwalton Golf Centre Solar Project.

Land Acquisition for Carbon Offsetting

- 4.10. Even if all the actions contained in the CMAP are successfully implemented there will still be some requirement for carbon offsetting for the carbon we will produce post 2030 from our operational activities. Therefore, on 14 May 2024 Cabinet approved a Carbon Offsetting Framework, which represents a very important component of the CMAP to achieve the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 4.11. The Framework's focus on offsetting within the Borough also supports the establishment of a range of habitats to promote ecological connectivity and recovery for the benefit of our residents. Based upon a 90% reduction in emission from the measured 2008/09 baseline, a residual 360 tonnes of carbon emissions would remain, and this would need to be offset/sequestered.
- 4.12. Importantly, due to the nature of carbon offsetting and sequestration, it is important that tree planting is delivered early in the time window (leading to 2030), to allow newly planted woodland to mature (as it takes nearly five years to commence sequestering carbon) and meadow/wet land to establish, thereby allowing the project to fully meet the decarbonisation targets required by 2030.
- 4.13. A significant key achievement in 2025/26 financial year has therefore been the land acquisition programme for carbon offset at Upper Broughton (Rushcliffe Woods) and land off Fosse Way, Kinoulton (Wolds Woods). Rushcliffe Woods is 21.54 hectares or 54 acres and Wolds Woods is 21.02 hectares or 52 acres, providing the authority with 106 acres for offset.
- 4.14. At full maturity it is expected that Rushcliffe Woods will offset 232.60 tonnes of CO₂ and Wolds Wood will offset 209 tonnes of CO₂ providing a total of 442 tonnes of carbon offsetting potential or 123% of our 360tonne offsetting target providing flexibility should our operational footprint change for example food waste collections in October 2027.

2050 Borough Wide Net Zero Target

- 4.15. The Heating Upgrade Grant 2 project has now been completed. This addressed 16 (29 measures) off gas properties in fuel poverty across the borough. The interventions were mainly insulation, air source heat pump and solar panels. When measured against the cost of LPG/oil heating both the cost/carbon savings are significant for the residents. There has also been a rise in the amount of Energy Company Obligation 4 (ECO4) declaration form sign offs within the Borough. 37 declarations have now been signed since the scheme began and 24 of those were in this reporting year. Interventions range from new gas boiler replacements to insulation and air source heat pumps. It is accessed via low income high cost, qualifying benefits and/or health conditions.
- 4.16. The CMAP Dashboard **Appendix 1** provides a summary of progress to date. The Communities Manager/Team Manager -Environment will deliver a presentation at the meeting to provide an overview on the action plan activity. It is essential to note that the carbon stats are always a year in arrears. Items such as Cotgrave Leisure Centre Decarbonisation Project will be recognised in the next reporting stats due towards end of April 2026 when annual consumption data is returned from energy providers.
- 4.17. Scope 3 emissions will also have to be brought into consideration on how the Council will measure and report on. The scope 3 emissions reporting is very likely to become mandatory in the near future and it will be essential to work with Finance on their new financial management system to deliver a way of measuring this with all activities undertaken via goods/services procured. Third party complimentary system via universities existing software from NHS and/or framework agreements will all be considered for best value for money.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

- 5.1. There is overwhelming scientific consensus that human activities have caused global warming. Without significant change in behaviour and policy, continued increases in temperature at the current rate will result in global warming reaching 1.5 degrees between 2030 and 2052. This would cause irreversible damage to the environment and result in climate related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply and economic growth (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report; October 2018). This highlights a significant longer-term risk of major environmental and societal damage resulting from inactivity to tackle climate change.
- 5.2. The technology available to deliver the significant carbon reductions required is constantly evolving. The desire to make faster carbon reductions through early adoption of new technology needs to be balanced against the risk that technology may be superseded or become available at a lower cost in the future. The available options will go through a process of due diligence to minimise the level of risk to the Council.

- 5.3. Local Government Reorganisation is a risk factor on how future projects are delivered and funded. Although there is likely to be a two-year period before any changes begin to happen it is worth exploring all avenues to ensure that the net zero 2030 target is achieved.
- 5.4. The cost of climate change targets presents a cost risk to the Council delivery of carbon reduction schemes which in themselves can be costly and does not always equate to financial savings e.g. electricity usage.
- 5.5. External funding can mitigate the cost of delivering carbon reduction, but there is a risk that external funding cannot be utilised in full if resources are not available to deliver schemes to deadlines.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

See **Appendix 2** for the movements and commitments of the Climate Change Reserve. The original Climate Change Reserve was established at £1m; this has since been topped up from additional grants, New Homes Bonus and in year underspends and has funded various initiatives. The projected balance is £2.492m by 31 March 2031. Reserves balances are dynamic and this may change.

The award of external energy efficiency grants and the use of the Climate Change Reserve to match fund has levered in over £7m of additional funding (Appendix 2).

For any further potential funding bids, a business case will be produced to demonstrate the non-financial and financial benefits/costs in line with Financial Regulations. This will ensure that grant submissions cover anticipated costs and, where match funding is required, the appropriate approval and budgetary provision is sought.

At the end of each financial year, the schemes identified are assessed for funding from the Climate Change Reserve and will be included in the Outturn Report for approval.

There is pressure on this Reserve going forwards as the Council strive to meet the commitment to achieve a carbon neutral target by 2030. In the outturn report for 2025/26, any underspends will be assessed with a view to identifying a top-up to the Climate Change Reserve.

6.2. Legal Implications

In 2019, the Government passed legislation to commit the UK to a legally binding target of net zero emissions by 2050. The target requires the UK to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero, compared with the previous target of at least 85% reduction from 1990 levels. The Council's Carbon Management action plan supports this aim at a local level.

Individual actions in the Action Plan may have legal implications (i.e. procurement, land acquisition) that will need to be considered for each project.

6.3. Equalities Implications

Tackling climate change through reducing emissions has the potential to benefit groups vulnerable to heat and air pollution. Where applicable, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed.

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

There are no implications arising from this report that impact on community safety in respect of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988.

6.5. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

There has now been a full year of BNG and the Senior Ecologist and Sustainability Officer has drafted the first Biodiversity Duty Report which has been submitted to Central Government. The new tablet and software are in place for the Assistant Biodiversity and Sustainability Officer to start monitoring the new BNG sites in April 26.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

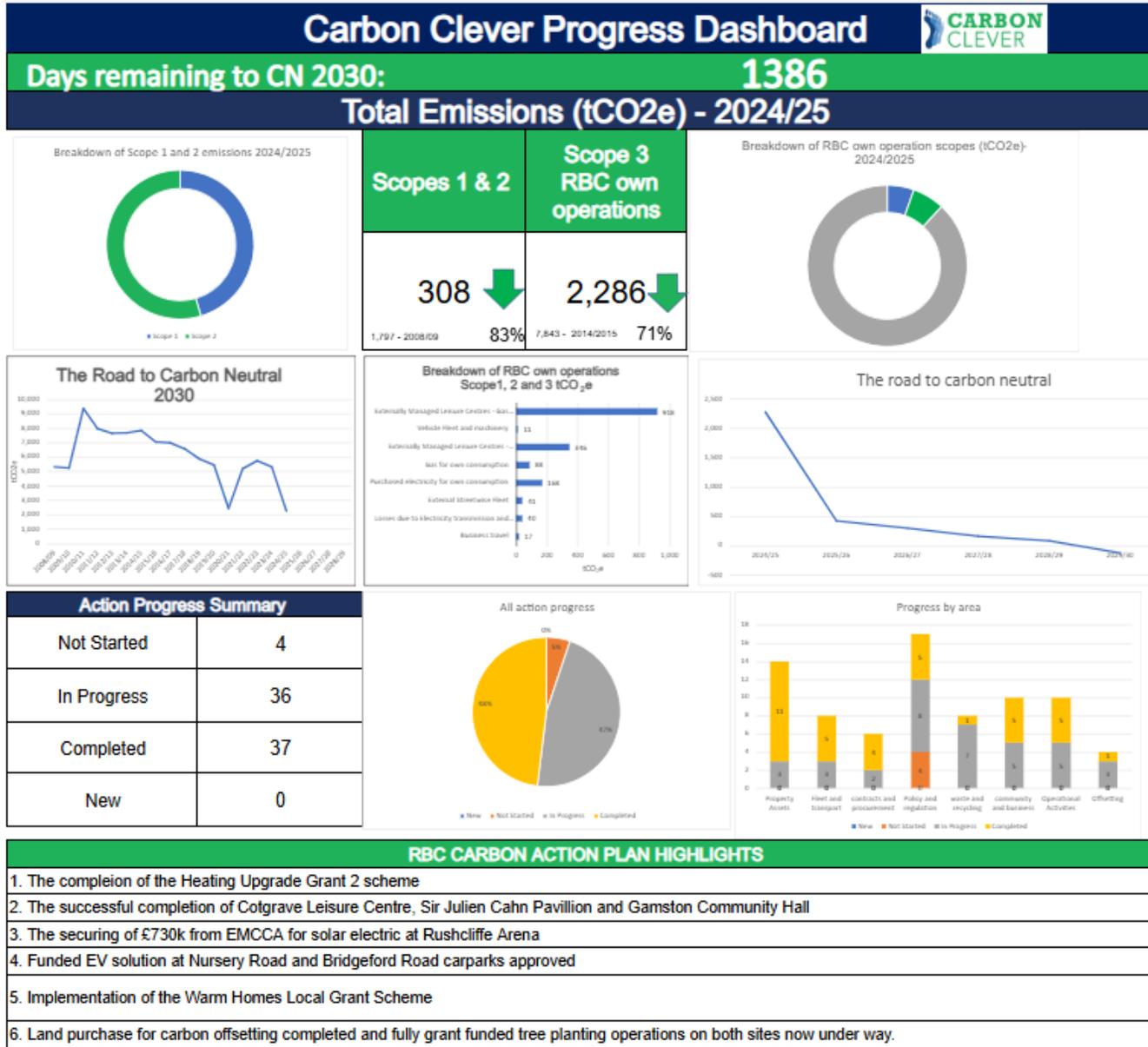
The Environment	Implementing a carbon reduction action plan and providing a budget to support delivery, are all designed to improve and safeguard the environment.
Quality of Life	Delivery of the carbon management action plan contributes to improvements in public health for example through improved air quality, food consumption and more physical activity through travel behaviour change.
Efficient Services	Enhancing the energy efficiency of the Council's assets will potentially lead to reductions in operating costs.
Sustainable Growth	Over the longer term it is anticipated that policy changes will lead to improved energy efficiency within residential and commercial developments.

8. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Communities Scrutiny Group notes the progress to date of the adopted carbon management action plan and priority projects for the forthcoming financial year 2026/27.

For more information contact:	David Banks Director - Neighbourhoods Tel: 0115 9148438 dbanks@rushcliffe.gov.uk
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<p>Background papers available for Inspection:</p>	<p>Report to Cabinet 11 November 2025 Rushcliffe Carbon Offsetting Framework- Land Acquisition (Kinoulton)</p> <p>Report to Cabinet 13 May 2025, Rushcliffe Carbon Offsetting Framework- Land Acquisition (Upper Broughton)</p> <p>Report to Cabinet 14 May 2024 Rushcliffe Carbon Offsetting Framework – Land Acquisition</p> <p>Report to Communities Scrutiny 21 March 2024 Carbon Management Plan annual scrutiny</p> <p>Report to Cabinet 14 December 2021 ‘Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030’</p> <p>Report to Cabinet 10 March 2020 ‘Carbon Management’</p>
<p>List of appendices:</p>	<p>Appendix 1 - Carbon Management Action Plan Dashboard</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Climate Change Reserve</p>



Appendix 2

Climate Change Reserve	Amount £000	Detail
Established Council 05.03.20	1,000	
Allocation Cabinet 10.11.20	(200)	National Centre for Integrated Zero Carbon Futures project at Ratcliffe on Soar
Top-up Council 03.03.22	200	
RCP	(30)	£22k PV Panels; £8k air source heat-pump
The Crematorium	(300)	Green Tech measures
Bingham Arena	(300)	Green Tech measures
Gamston CH	(7)	Insulaton
Gresham	(9)	EVCP ancillary works
Rushcliffe Country Park	(25)	EVCP Bays and ancillary works
Fleet	(20)	Genex Fleet and Infrastructure Audit
Cotgrave LC 50%	(108)	Match funding for Salix Bid decarbonisation works
BALANCE at 31.03.24:	201	
Schemes 24-25:		
CLC 50%	(43)	Match funding for Salix Bid decarbonisation works
U10 Moorbridge	(6)	Heat decarbonisation works not planned for 24-25
Vehicle Vinyl wraps	(4)	
West Park Enhancements	(6)	
Budget Report Council 07.03.24	750	From New Homes Bonus
Budget Report Council 07.03.24	100	From additional Government Grant
Budget Report Council 07.03.24	377	From New Homes Bonus
Top-up Council 10.12.24	698	From 24/25 underspends
Land for biodiversity net gain	425	Not yet committed
BALANCE at 31.03.25:	2,492	
Projected Expenditure 2025/26		
Land Acquisition for Carbon Offsetting	(1,042)	2 pieces of land acquired
Streetwise Depot Carbon Reduction	(100)	Vehicle Wash contribution
PROJECTED BALANCE at 31.03.26:	1,350	
Land Acquisition for Carbon Offsetting	(458)	balance of sum earmarked
Hound Lodge 26/27	(285)	Decarbonisation works
KLC and Rushcliffe Arena 27/28	(300)	Decarbonisation works
Lutterell Hall decarbonisation works 28/29	(75)	Decarbonisation works
Planned transfers in to reserve during MTFS	2,201	
PROJECTED BALANCE at 31.03.31:	2,433	
Climate Change Expenditure Met from other Grants:		
Gresham Floodlights Existing	(31)	Football Foundation Grant/S106s
Gresham Floodlights New	(66)	Football Foundation Grant/S106s
LED Energy Efficient Lighting schemes Operational and Invest	(101)	SALIX Grant
RBC EV Network	(53)	OZEV Grant from Dept of Transport
Energy Efficiency Grants to owner occupiers	(899)	LAD2 Grants
Energy Efficiency Grants to owner occupiers	(1,149)	LAD3 and HUG Grants
Energy Efficiency Grants to owner occupiers	(231)	HUG2
Energy Efficiency Grants to owner occupiers	(511)	RETROFIT Grants
Public Sector De-Carb Scheme 16.01.23 CLC	(1,215)	Salix Award
Energy Audit	(50)	UKSPF
Gamston CH and Sir Julien Cahn Pavilion decarbonisation	(105)	Salix
Edwalton Community Facility land acquisition	(176)	UKSPF
Cotgrave LC decarbonisation	(110)	UKSPF
Keyworth LC decarbonisation	(150)	UKSPF
U10 Moorbridge EVCP	(40)	UKSPF
Cotgrave LC PV panels	(250)	Sport England
Energy Efficiency Grants to owner occupiers	(1,200)	Warm Homes Grant
Arena Solar Panels	(729)	EMCCA
TOTAL External Funding:	(7,066)	



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 2 April 2026

West Bridgford Customer Contact Point

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. For the Communities Scrutiny Group to assess the impact of the relocation of our Customer Service face-to-face offer in West Bridgford following the move from Fountain Court to West Bridgford Library in 2024.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group consider the content of the report (and presentation from officers) and identify any follow-up actions required.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The relocation of the Council's Customer Service Centre at Fountain Court on Gordon Road in West Bridgford to the local library took place in 2024 with the aim of maintaining service levels whilst delivering even better value for money. The report considers the background and decision-making made by the Council to continue delivering this frontline service and if any further action or review is required.

4. Supporting Information

Background

- 4.1. In February 2024, RBC's Cabinet began to explore plans to relocate its Fountain Court Customer Service Centre on Gordon Road to West Bridgford Library to help deliver an even better, value for money service without significantly impacting customers.
- 4.2. Given the relative decreasing numbers visiting the centre, compared to 2019/2020 when it opened, it was felt the Council should optimise the use of its assets in a new operating era after COVID-19. It referenced possible benefits as bringing its then occupied commercial unit back to the market to further boost the town centre, leveraging financial savings and the possibility of a shared service space opportunity with a public sector partner.

- 4.3. The Fountain Court site opened three days a week from 8.30am to 5pm on Mondays and Thursdays, and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays, with annual costs exceeding £55,000 mostly consisting of rent, utilities and business rates.
- 4.4. Since re-opening after the lifting of COVID restrictions in June 2021, face to face enquiries gradually fell year on year with 4,578 visits in 2022 and 3,780 in 2023. This decrease was also in comparison before Covid where visitors were over 10,000 per annum in 2018, prompting the Cabinet and officers to question the best way forward for the service.
- 4.5. RBC are contracted to occupy Fountain Court until February 2029. The lease allowed the Council to explore sub-letting and assignment options, subject to the landlord's approval and an Authorised Guarantee Agreement. This was confirmed and guarantees all covenants contained within the current lease including but not least rent, business rates, service charges and building insurance.
- 4.6. In line with the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025, an action point was agreed to examine all Customer Service sites including existing leases and service level agreements with partners and reviewing each site annually. This was to assess location and if each site met customers' needs such as still being easily accessible, located to nearby public transport stops or car parking, and had appropriate facilities to address the range of customers' needs.
- 4.7. When the 2024 review was completed for Fountain Court, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder and officers identified the possible reuse of the asset for a better value service. With limited suitable local venues, the library's location was identified as suitable as close to all West Bridgford car parks and many public transport routes, accessible and similar to the Fountain Court site in location and convenience. It also offered a familiar landmark for many Rushcliffe residents to locate the service.
- 4.8. Inspire, who operate libraries on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council, were receptive to the move and offered RBC an existing alcove to the left of library entrance as a possible service area with space for four desks.
- 4.9. Members of Cabinet viewed the area in March 2024 and agreed, subject to advice from both the Council's and Inspire's property teams, of converting it to create a Customer Service Contact Point. Concurrently, a tenant was sought to sub-let the Fountain Court premises with the landlord's permission. This was secured in May 2024.
- 4.10. Both RBC and Inspire agreed a three-year lease at the library, with an option to extend, allowing all parties to evaluate the success of the location in terms of both service delivery and demand.
- 4.11. Alterations took place and the service opened in the library on September 2, 2024. Between the closure of the Fountain Court site and opening at the Library, customers were without access to face-to-face services in West

Bridgford for three days. Customers were signposted to other contact points as required and full telephone and online services continued. A project team including RBC's Customer Services and Property Services worked in partnership with Inspire to deliver the ICT and property requirements.

- 4.12. Opening hours at the library are similar to the Fountain Court site, switched slightly to align with then Library opening hours to be Mondays 9am to 5pm, Thursdays 9am to 5pm and Fridays 9am to 4.30pm.
- 4.13. A sustained publicity campaign across Council channels and the local press informed residents and stakeholders of the move which saw very limited impact on customers arriving at the incorrect location wishing to access the service.

Impact on customers and services

- 4.14. The impact on customers and services between the two sites has not been significant with customer numbers increasing when comparing the last 12 months before leaving Fountain Court and the 12 months after starting the service at the library site.

Face to face visits Fountain Court August 2023-July 2024 (last full year of operation)	Face to face visits West Bridgford Library September 2024-August 2025 (first full year of operation)
4,193	4,554

- 4.15. Provision of services is essentially the same at both sites with the exception being housing and licensing appointments which now take place at Rushcliffe Arena as required with convenient close car parking and close transport links still available.
- 4.16. Residents seeking advice approach one of three advisors for face-to-face support, the same number as at Fountain Court and taxi drivers also take tests on a fourth desk that doubles as a temporary place for short drop-down point for customer services supervisors.
- 4.17. The nature and volume of enquiries has not changed considerably. The most popular Customer Service enquiries for the same period were:

Most popular service enquiries Fountain Court August 2023-July 2024	Most popular service enquiries West Bridgford Library September 2024-August 2025
Council tax and business rates Waste services Garden waste service Strategic housing Benefits	Council tax and business rates Waste services Garden waste service Benefits Environmental Health

- 4.18. The Council continues to develop the breadth of its digital offering enabling residents to access services at a time and in a way that suits them best.

However, it also remains committed to providing a face-to-face offering for those residents who prefer this method of engagement.

- 4.19. Meeting rooms and quiet areas in the library were identified to be available on demand should residents request it, maintaining existing standards and accessibility and matching arrangements at other contact points at Bingham, East Leake and Cotgrave.
- 4.20. In the 12 months before the move was made, there were seven housing appointments at Fountain Court and four requests for private conversations. As of February 2026, there have been 12 housing appointments and two requests logged for private conversations at the library (since September 2024), utilising a library meeting room on both occasions. There have been no other concerns about the of lack of privacy recorded by advisors. Should rooms be unavailable, an appointment can be made at short notice, including at Rushcliffe Arena if needed the same day.
- 4.21. A customer satisfaction survey in late 2025, and repeated in early 2026, has seen 96% of customers respond favourably on the service:

Question	Response
How easy was it to find our contact point?	Very easy 96%
How satisfied are you with the service you received today?	Very satisfied 95%
Were the staff knowledgeable and able to answer your query?	Yes 96%
Do you feel any of the personal data you discussed today was handled with care and confidentiality?	Yes 96%

Staff feedback

- 4.22. Customer Services Advisors and Supervisors have transitioned to the new site successfully. For staff comfort, some additional work was required to ensure the alcove area was carpeted, a blind installed due to low sun through the window at certain times and requesting Inspire amend a heater above the library entrance door.
- 4.23. Following feedback to Inspire, the library’s thermostat was also increased accordingly during winter months and mobile heaters introduced on some days as required.
- 4.24. In an anonymous staff survey with Customer Service advisors in 2025, minor issues with the above conditions were cited and these have now been resolved. These included addressing with Inspire masonry bees that were congregating in a light fitting above the alcove. Work has since taken place to ensure this issue does not continue.
- 4.25. Staff have access to a communal kitchen to spend lunch and other breaks as needed and there have been positive working relationships with Inspire staff.

- 4.26. The remaining proximity to a town centre has also been cited as a benefit to working in an advisor role and the site is adjacent to the largest of the three local council car parks.
- 4.27. The Council's Corporate Warning Register is used as required to protect members of staff should customers act inappropriately.

Inspire contract and relocation savings

- 4.28. The Council and Inspire agreed an initial three year-agreement from August 2024, aware of the uncertainty of Local Government Reorganisation.
- 4.29. This was initially costed at £2,500 in rent per annum and £2,500 in contract services per annum plus a nominal inflation-linked annual increase. This is for cleaning of the alcove area and upkeep of the communal facilities shared with Inspire staff. Subsequently, the move is saving around £50,000 per annum compared with Fountain Court, with costs of the move offset in these savings for the service. The rent is a tenth of the cost of the Fountain Court site. Based on the revenue costs the costs per face to face customer have reduced from £13.12 to £1.10, providing better value for money for Rushcliffe residents, combined with no reduction in performance.

Relocation costs

- 4.30. The costs of the move from Fountain Court to the library were (a payback of less than one year):

Item	Cost
ICT infrastructure installation – internet line, cabling to comms box at back of building, remote access point	£11,000
Property installation at Library - furniture and acoustics, joinery and bookshelf removal, redecoration	£6,500
Legal fees	£4,000
Property agents marketing	£3,000
Fountain Court property removal	£2,500
Arena ICT equipment	£1,016
Total	£28,016

Comparison to other contact points

- 4.31. For comparison, visitor numbers for the other contact points in the Borough that offer a similar environment to answer customer queries:

Cotgrave Hub, Mondays: July 2023-July 2024	694
September 2024-August 2025	701
East Leake Library, Wednesdays: July 2023-July 2024	221
September 2024-August 2025	243
Bingham Medical Centre, Thursdays: July 2023-July 2024	487
September 2024-August 2025	542

Looking forward

- 4.32. The contract until August 2027 will be reviewed with Local Government Reorganisation in mind to potentially take this to April 2028.
- 4.33. The Customer Services team will continue to look where it can improve customer experience when visiting the library including further customer satisfaction surveys and listening and responding to feedback in its day-to-day operations.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no direct risks or uncertainties arising from this report.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report, however, the service will continue to listen to feedback on where it could improve this service with equality and inclusion in mind.

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

There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report. The Council's Corporate Warning Register is used as required should customers act inappropriately when engaging the Council.

6.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no direct Biodiversity Net Gain implications arising from this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	No impact
Quality of Life	No impact
Efficient Services	The Council is committed to deliver the best services for residents, in the most efficient way possible, mindful of the many ways customers wish to interact on their queries.
Sustainable Growth	No impact

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group consider the content of the report (and presentation from officers) and identify any follow-up actions required.

For more information contact:	Ed Palmer Communications and Customer Services Manager Tel: 0115 914 8559 epalmer@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	Appendix 1: Scrutiny Request

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Rushcliffe Borough Council – Scrutiny Request

Councillor Request for Scrutiny	
Councillor Julie Chaplain	
Proposed topic of scrutiny ...	West Bridgford Customer Contact Point
<p>I would like to explore ...</p> <p>It is helpful to include why you feel this topic requires scrutiny, what concerns you, what concerns are being raised with you, and how scrutiny will lead to better outcomes or services to residents.</p>	<p>I would like to explore the impact, on customers and services, of moving the West Bridgford Contact Point from Fountain Court to West Bridgford Library.</p> <p>Following the Cabinet decision in February 2024 to close the office in West Bridgford to save money, it is important that the Council scrutinises the outcome of that decision by investigating the impact that it has had on residents seeking advice, and the services provided.</p> <p>Residents have raised concerns about the of lack of privacy in the library, conversations have been overheard, including phone conversations, which people have felt should be conducted in private.</p> <p>We feel there is value in scrutinising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The background and rationale for the move and how it was achieved • The nature and volume of customer contact before and after the move • The breadth of services offered before and after the move and whether any changes were made to services at this time • The cost of providing a face-to-face presence in West Bridgford both before and after the move • The benefits of moving the Contact Point from Fountain Court to West Bridgford Library to the Council, other organisations (namely Nottinghamshire County Council), or the local area • Any feedback about the Contact Point – positive or negative – from customers • An understanding of the wider context – how does a face-to-face provision in West Bridgford sit within the Council’s wider Customer

	<p>Service offering including data and trend analysis across different sites and methods of contact.</p> <p>If possible, we feel it would be valuable for the Scrutiny Group to visit the site prior to the item being scrutinised.</p>	
<p>I think this topic should be scrutinised because ... (please tick)</p>		<p>Poor Performance Identified</p>
	<p>X</p>	<p>Change in Legislation or Local Policy</p> <p>Change from having a dedicated office space to using a part of the library</p>
	<p>X</p>	<p>Resident Concern or Interest</p>
		<p>Cabinet Recommendation</p>
		<p>Links to the Corporate Strategy</p>
		<p>Other (please state reason)</p>
<p>What outcomes are you seeking from this scrutiny?</p>	<p>Understanding of the effect of moving the contact point and, if this has been detrimental, an action plan to improve services.</p>	

<p>Collaboration</p>	
<p>Matrix developed in conjunction with officers?</p>	<p>Yes</p>