

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 2 JULY 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 R Butler (Chair), H Parekh (Vice-Chair), M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, J Walker, L Way, T Wells, J Wheeler and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

I Ali	Monitoring Officer (Interim)
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
C Caven-Atack	Monitoring Officer (Interim)
A Hill	Chief Executive
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager
S Whittaker	Assistant Director of Finance

APOLOGIES:

Councillors D Viridi, R Walker and G Wheeler

13 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

14 Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 May 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 21 May 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

15 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor stated that his year had begun very busily attending 10 events. A particular highlight had been joining staff at the Municipal Journal (MJ) Awards in London, which had seen the Council's Streetwise team win the Best Council Services Award. The Mayor felt very proud of the team and knew how much residents appreciated their hard work. The Mayor referred to his Civic Service on 19 July, and hoped people would be able to attend. He also mentioned Councillor Brown's 24 hour bus tour, on behalf of the Mayor's chosen charity, Guide Dogs, and encouraged everyone to sponsor Councillor Brown and watch

his progress via the tracker on his phone. The Mayor advised Council of the funeral arrangements for former Mayor and Councillor, Mrs Christine Jeffreys.

16 Leader's Announcements

The Leader echoed the Mayor's comments regarding the MJ Awards, reiterated what a fantastic job the Streetwise team did and advised that he would be visiting the team soon to congratulate them. The Leader stated that he was also expecting good news regarding Green Flag Awards and hoped to bring further details soon.

17 Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive announced that Lorna Vertigan had been appointed to the Director of Development and Economic Growth and Deputy Chief Executive post. Ms Vertigan was currently working at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, with extensive experience in the sector, and he felt that Rushcliffe was fortunate to have secured her in this role, and he looked forward to her starting work on 14 September.

18 Citizens' Questions

No citizens' questions were received for this meeting.

19 Petitions

No petitions were presented at this meeting.

20 Appointment to the Monitoring Officer Role (Interim)

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke MBE presented the report of the Chief Executive, updating the Council on the appointment to the role of the Council's designated Monitoring Officer (Interim).

The Leader confirmed that following the departure of the previous Monitoring Officer, Mrs Charlotte Caven-Atack had covered the role in the interim, and he thanked her for doing so. The Leader advised that there had been a long and extensive recruitment process trying to secure a permanent replacement; however, it had not been possible to do that. To ensure that a designated officer was in place, a further interview process was undertaken and the Leader was pleased to announce that Mr Ifty Ali had been secured as the interim Monitoring Officer for an initial temporary period, as outlined in paragraph 7.1 of the report.

Councillor Brennan seconded the recommendation.

On behalf of the Labour Group, Councillor J Walker thanked Mrs Caven-Atack for her professionalism and commitment and referred to her impressive ability to work flexibly across the Council. On behalf of the Group, she also welcomed Mr Ali and stated that at a time when good governance and transparency were more important than ever, it was essential that this function was fully supported

to ensure that work across the Chamber could continue constructively.

Councillor Thomas reiterated thanks to Mrs Caven-Atack and expressed disappointment that the Council had been unable to employ a member of staff for this important role, and she felt that the additional costs incurred, as detailed in the report were not a good use of public money. Councillor Thomas asked the Leader if he believed that the difficulty in recruitment was related to uncertainties over Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and if so, would Rushcliffe reconsider bonuses for staff remaining at Rushcliffe until April 2028, who did not obtain a position with the new council, and were not eligible for redundancy.

The Leader agreed that there was uncertainty regarding LGR, with announcements expected soon, and he felt that the comments raised by Councillor Thomas were interesting and could be discussed going forward as LGR progressed.

It was **RESOLVED** that Mr Ifty Ali be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer (Interim) from Thursday, 2 July 2026.

Mr Ali came joined meeting and took over the role of Monitoring Officer.

21 **Approval of the Scrutiny Annual Reports 2025/26**

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 providing a review of the work undertaken by the Council's four Scrutiny Groups during 2025/26.

The Leader welcomed Mr Ali and wished him well. The Leader stated that scrutiny was an incredibly important operation of this Council and welcomed the report. Once Councillor Brennan had been given the opportunity to second the report, he asked the Mayor to invite the respective Scrutiny Chairs to summarise any highlights of the year.

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

Councillor Williams, Chair of the Corporate Overview Group (COG) for 2025/26, agreed that scrutiny was a key function of the Council, and as the overarching group, COG looked both retrospectively and forwards to identify ways to improve services for residents. COG considered a range of reports and looked at all requests made by officers and Councillors, and he thanked everyone for those, and hoped that requests would continue to come forward. He thanked officers, in particular the Assistant Director – Corporate Services, the Democratic Services Team, officers who attended meetings to present reports and members of the Group, and he looked forward to the year ahead.

Councillor Simms, Chair of the Governance Scrutiny Group, stated that this was his first year as Chair of the Group. He thanked the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, the Assistant Director – Finance and the Democratic Services Team for their support, officers and outside representatives who attended meetings to present reports, his Vice-chair Councillor Gaunt for his

support and members of the Group. Councillor Simms stated that he saw good governance as the bedrock of the Council, Rushcliffe was an outstanding, well run Council, and as a governance professional, he was honoured to Chair this Group. The Group had been well attended, undertaking effective scrutiny, which he encouraged, to ensure that the Council continued to have effective governance, especially with Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon. Councillor Simms looked forward to 2026/27 and continuing to work together and improve.

Councillor Parekh, Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Group, referred to the wide range of issues considered by the Group, as detailed in the report, which had directly impacted on residents' lives, by providing constructive challenge, holding decision makers to account and supporting continuous service improvement. Councillor Parekh thanked all members of the Group for their thoughtful and constructive discussions, Cabinet members, officers and partner organisations who attended meetings, and her Vice-chair, Councillor Plant. She went on to thank the Director – Neighbourhoods, the Assistant Director – Corporate Services, the Assistant Director – Environment and Communities, and the Assistant Director – Public Protection for their guidance and professionalism throughout the year, and the Democratic Services Team for their excellent support.

Councillors Combella, Chair of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group, stated that it had been an interesting year for the Group, scrutinising various topics, as detailed in the report, despite being impacted by national and worldwide matters beyond the Council's control. Councillor Combella highlighted the important work around the Freeport, which was of vital significance to residents, with implications for the wider economy, and she looked forward to receiving an update report at the Group's next meeting. She thanked officers, her Vice-chair Councillor Way, who had stepped down from her role during the year, and Councillor Billin who had ably replaced her and Group members.

Councillor Gaunt, the Vice-chair of Governance Scrutiny Group, felt that the annual reports showed the vital role that scrutiny played in good decision making, with members across all groups working together constructively to challenge and improve the work of this authority. He stated that it had been a successful year for the Governance Scrutiny Group, asking challenging questions and providing constructive oversight of the Council's finance, governance and risk management. Councillor Gaunt thanked the Chair for his effective leadership, Group members, the independent member and outside representatives and officers for their professionalism and support. He went on to thank COG, for shaping the scrutiny work programme and to Councillor Williams for the constructive and fair way he had led that. He advised that a particular highlight had been the effective work around equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), which had identified the many practical improvements that had been delivered for residents, at little or no additional cost. Looking ahead, Councillor Gaunt referred to the importance of scrutiny remaining member-led, and whilst officer advice was greatly appreciated, ultimately it was for members to determine the priorities for scrutiny. Councillor Gaunt also felt that it was important to reflect on how work was balanced between the various groups, to ensure that work was more evenly spread.

Councillor Plant, Vice-chair of Communities Scrutiny Group, thanked Councillor Parekh for being a very effective Chair. She referred to the many interesting issues the Group had scrutinised, asking questions and raising concerns, which was important; however, she felt that it often failed to impact on the service itself. Councillor Plant did highlight the excellent meeting with Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, challenging its representatives on a wide range of issues, with the Group agreeing to have an update report later in the year. Councillor Plant repeated her request from last year that it would be courteous for Vice-chairs to see the draft Annual Scrutiny Report before it was published.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Brennan apologised to Councillor Plant and advised that she had been assured that both Chairs and Vice-chairs would be sent copies of reports before they were published and she thanked all Councillors who took part in scrutiny for the reasons already outlined.

The Leader reiterated the importance of scrutiny and that this was all about constructive improvement of the Council's operations, through development and working together.

It was **RESOLVED** that the work undertaken by the four Scrutiny Groups during 2025/26 be endorsed.

22 Notices of Motion

Notice of motion to be proposed by Councillor Birch and seconded by Councillor Chewings.

The Mayor stated that he had been advised that Councillor Birch wished to alter his motion, and asked Councillor Birch to confirm that.

Councillor Birch confirmed that he wished to propose the following altered motion:

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Publish quarterly reports detailing all Councillor expense claims, including:
 - claimant name;
 - event or purpose;
 - amount claimed; and
 - and category of expenditure;
2. Require all expense claims to include sufficient information to enable a reasonable member of the public to understand:
 - what expenditure was incurred;
 - why it was incurred; and
 - why it fell within the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme.

3. Request the Governance Scrutiny Group to undertake a comprehensive review of the Council's Members' Expenses Scheme, including formal consideration of:
 - a) the adequacy of the current arrangements for verifying and auditing Members' expense claims;
 - b) whether the categories of reimbursable duties remain appropriate and reflect public expectations, including claims relating to attendance at Remembrance services, charity events, civic functions and other ceremonial or voluntary community events;
 - c) whether the information published alongside expense claims is sufficient to enable meaningful public scrutiny;
 - d) whether additional safeguards, declarations, audit arrangements or reporting requirements should be introduced to strengthen transparency, accountability and value for money; and
 - e) any other amendments the Committee considers necessary to improve public confidence in the Council's Members' Expenses Scheme.
4. Report back to Full Council within six months with recommendations to improve transparency, accountability, and public confidence.

On being put to the vote to accept the alteration, the vote was lost.

Councillor Birch proposed his original motion as follows:

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Publish quarterly reports detailing all Councillor expense claims, including:
 - claimant name;
 - event or purpose;
 - amount claimed; and
 - and category of expenditure;
2. Require all expense claims to include sufficient explanatory detail to allow meaningful public scrutiny.
3. Request the Governance Scrutiny Group or appropriate committee to undertake a review of the Council's Expenses Scheme.
4. Report back to Full Council within six months with recommendations to improve transparency, accountability, and public confidence.

Councillor Birch stated that this motion was not an allegation of misconduct against any Councillor, or that anyone had broken any rules, nor was it about naming and shaming individuals, as throughout his discussions with colleagues and officers over the past six months, he had been concerned if the current rules still commanded public confidence. He believed that there was a difference between something being allowed and something being appropriate, and referred to the Parliamentary expenses scandal in 2009, which had

highlighted that the vast majority of claims made had been within the rules. Councillor Birch clarified that he was not comparing Rushcliffe with Westminster; however, some parallels existed, with the Council writing its own Councillor Expenses Scheme, just as Parliament had then, and despite having an independent advisory board, the Council was not obliged to follow its recommendations. In 2009, the public was not asking if the rules were followed, they were asking if taxpayers should pay for those things, which was the question Councillors should be asking now. Councillor Birch stated that every Councillor was a custodian of public money, and they should hold themselves to a higher standard rather than complying with the minimum legal requirements. He referred to the Freedom of Information (FOI) response he had received, which had highlighted that almost all of the expense claims during that period were made by members of one political group, with some claiming for attendance at charity events and Remembrance Services. He questioned how those claims would appear to the public and reminded everyone that they were paid to be Councillors. Councillor Birch stated that this motion was not seeking to prevent anyone from serving as a Councillor due to financial circumstances, it was asking for the expenses scheme to be reviewed to ensure that current arrangements reflected modern expectations. He felt that the best way to protect the reputation of both Councillors and this Council was to embrace scrutiny, and that this motion was about accountability and ensuing that every resident could have confidence that public money was spent carefully and responsibly.

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

Councillor J Wheeler proposed the following amendment to the motion:

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Require all expense claims to include sufficient explanatory details to allow public scrutiny.
2. Request the Governance Scrutiny Group to undertake a review of the Council's Expenses Scheme.
3. Request a report back to Full Council within six months with any recommendations.

The Leader seconded the amendment to the motion and reserved the right to speak.

In moving his amendment, Councillor Wheeler stated that the Conservative Group had no issue with having a review, he welcomed Councillor Birch's comments that there were no accusations of any wrong doing and he had complete confidence in officers and the Council's internal audit processes. He advised that he had put forward this amendment as it was important not to predetermine scrutiny, the Group should decide the content of the review, with input from Councillors. Councillor Wheeler agreed that it was important to include sufficient explanatory details, to provide some context to residents on what any claims covered. He agreed with Councillor Birch that no one should be vilified for claiming expense, it was a personal choice, personal

circumstances were different and it was about fairness. He stated that some Councillors had given up work, or gone part time to fulfil their roles, and it was important to ensure an adequate allowances scheme was in place. Councillor Wheeler noted the request in the original motion for quarterly reports and referred to the significant work required to produce those and given that the amount claimed last year totalled £4k, he felt that the frequency of reports should be determined by the Group as part of the review.

Councillor Birch confirmed that he accepted the amendment, which then became the substantive motion.

Whilst supporting the amended motion, Councillor Polenta felt that the original motion provided clarity, accountability and a timetable for everyone to measure progress against, including quarterly updates. This motion would look at the standards the Council set for itself, ensuring that Councillors were acting in the most responsible way, with compliance being the minimum expected standard. Councillors should question the necessity of any claim, was it proportionate and in the public interest. Councillors were entrusted with public money, and should demonstrate that they had acted with integrity, and this motion was about improving transparency and accountability, which was the backbone of good governance. Councillor Polenta believed that information of genuine public interest should be proactively published and being transparent protected both the public and Councillors, with less room for misunderstanding. Public oversight should not be feared, it was the foundation of democratic accountability and Councillors should always strive to go beyond minimum requirements.

Councillor Thomas stated that whilst she could understand the sentiment of Councillor Birch's motion, she could not accept it, as she felt that allowances and expenses were important to ensure that candidates from all socio-economic groups were encouraged to stand. She agreed that expense claims should be checked to ensure they were valid, there should be transparency and she supported a review. However, Councillor Thomas felt that there should be no shame attached to claiming expenses that met the criteria and she took exception to the implications to the contrary in the wording of the preamble to this motion, and on that basis, she stated that she could not support the motion even though it had been amended. Councillor Thomas also noted that it was perhaps to be expected that the Conservative Group claimed more expenses, as they were still the majority party, covering key roles.

Councillor Gowland felt that the motion would provide clarity and transparency by explaining individual circumstances and removing any possible accusations and she agreed that it was acceptable for Councillors to claim travelling expenses where appropriate.

Councillor Edyvean stated that he was going to support the original motion and confirmed that the expenses scheme had been thoroughly reviewed in 2015 and questioned if it had been reviewed again. He agreed that it was important to review the scheme and that claiming should be a personal choice.

In supporting the amended motion, Councillor Chewings referred to the first point in the original motion and stated that he felt this was very basic

information, although he agreed that the review should be set by the Governance Scrutiny Group. He stated that he could not agree with Councillor Thomas that it was about naming and shaming and agreed that Councillors should be entitled to claim; however, it was important for the public to be able to see what claims were being made.

Councillor Thomas made a point of clarification that she was not talking about naming and shaming, she was talking about the general tenor of the preamble to the motion, which implied that there was shame in claiming, it was not about shaming individuals.

Councillor Chewings stated that if he had misunderstood, he apologised and reiterated that the motion was about allowing public scrutiny, as Councillors were accountable to the electorate.

Councillor Birch stated that he was disappointed that his original amendment had been watered down but was pleased that some progress had been made. He agreed with Councillor Wheeler that nobody should be vilified, this was about scrutinising the scheme. Whilst he disagreed with Councillor Thomas, he acknowledged her comments and agreed that anybody should be able to become a Councillor and have the ability to claim expenses. He was surprised that some Councillors claimed expenses for attending the Arena, which he considered to be Councillors' primary place of work, because in the private sector you could not do that.

Councillor Gaunt made a point of personal explanation that 99% of the public sector also did not make expense claims.

Councillor Birch acknowledged those comments and advised that 97% of expenses claimed were by members of the Conservative Group, despite it having just over half of all Councillors. He stated that it could be argued that this was because they had more responsibility and attended more meetings, but he disagreed with that assumption, as many other Councillors, including himself attending lots of meetings and claimed no expenses. Councillor Birch also raised concerns about dual claims made by some Councillors who were also County Council members and felt that this should also be scrutinised. He hoped that the Governance Scrutiny Group would undertake a successful review, encouraging more openness and democratic accountability.

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

23 **Questions from Councillors**

a) Question from Councillor Birch to The Leader, Councillor Clarke MBE.

“Do the Conservative Group agree that parish and town councils play an important role in local democracy by providing highly local representation, supporting community initiatives and giving residents a dedicated voice on matters affecting their area?”

The Leader said yes.

The Mayor asked Councillor Birch if he had a supplementary question.

The Mayor ruled on the supplementary question by Councillor Birch and it was rephrased and put as:

“Councillor Clarke, you answered 'yes' to my question. Does that extend to the provision of a council in West Bridgford?”

The Leader stated that the original question asked if parish and town councils played an important role in local democracy, and as West Bridgford did not have a town council at the moment; his answer was therefore related to the original question, not to whether there was any potential that West Bridgford had a town council or not.

b) Question from Councillor Polenta to Councillor J Wheeler.

“I recognise that, in granting the 25-year lease of part of West Park to Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club, and the consultation process that preceded it, the Council complied with its statutory obligations under Section 123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972. I also acknowledge that a planning-style consultation was not legally required and that no formal objections were received during the statutory consultation period. However, since the lease commenced, I have received a number of representations from residents, particularly regular dog walkers, who are concerned about the enclosure of an area that had previously been open and accessible. Many describe this space as more than just a recreational area, highlighting its role in supporting daily routines, informal social contact, and longstanding community networks. A consistent theme in these responses is surprise that they were unaware of the consultation process and therefore felt unable to comment before the decision was made.

Given the apparent disconnect between the lack of formal objections during the consultation process and the concerns now being raised, I wonder if the Council considers whether the practical implications of the lease were communicated clearly enough. For example, perhaps it could have been made more explicit that the area would become enclosed and managed as a dedicated sporting facility, alongside clearer guidance on how residents could make formal representations. While I recognise that statutory requirements were met, does the Council accept that there are lessons to be learned about how proposals affecting public open space are communicated, and will the Council consider a more proactive approach to ensure residents feel informed and able to engage in future consultations?”

Councillor Wheeler advised that the Council followed necessary processes, including public notices, press articles and a site meeting, which had included Ward Councillors. He believed that the changes at West Park had maximised site usage, whilst ensuring that the open space remained open to the public. A balance had to be struck, with lots of available green provision close by, and he confirmed that no comments had been received at the time. Councillor Wheeler stated that

the Council constantly looked at engagement with residents and would continue to do so, through its updated Communications Strategy.

The Mayor asked Councillor Polenta if she had a supplementary question.

“Will the Council reflect on whether future proposals affecting public open spaces could benefit from additional communication or engagement, such as on-site notices or direct engagement with principal stakeholders, such as the dog walkers, or other informal park users, so that residents not only have the opportunity to make formal representations and object, but also feel genuinely involved in decisions affecting public spaces that they value?”

Councillor Wheeler reiterated that the Council had followed correct procedures and confirmed that the Council constantly reviewed how it engaged with the public, and he referred to the Council’s excellent communications record. He acknowledged that some residents had expressed concerns, and officers had been engaging with them, and would continue to do so.

c) Question from Councillor Gowland to Councillor Inglis

“Would the Borough consider taking necessary measures to introduce laws or Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) where appropriate to require one person not to be in charge of four or more dogs on land managed by Rushcliffe Borough Council?”

Councillor Inglis confirmed that the Council had introduced a dog related PSPO in 2022, which had been amended in July 2025 and was in force for three years. That PSPO already included a provision for only walking four dogs in specific locations, and on other Council owned public open space land the PSPO restricted the number of dogs to six. This number was chosen following extensive feedback and consultation and the opportunity to consider any further change would take place when the PSPO was reviewed and potentially renewed in two years’ time.

The Mayor asked Councillor Gowland if she had a supplementary question.

“Can I ask the Council to do some publicity on social media about this and also engage with other local landowners where people walk dogs, to try and raise the issue because this is a growing issue?”

Councillor Inglis confirmed that any issues would be addressed, as everyone wanted safe environments, hence the establishment of the PSPO in the first place.

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

CHAIR