MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY GROUP
THURSDAY, 23 JULY 2026

Held at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber Area B, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford and live streamed on Rushcliffe Borough Council's YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors A Brown (Chair), L Plant (Vice-Chair), J Billin, C Grocock, D Mason, P Matthews, H Parekh, A Phillips and S Ellis (as substitute)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor Virdi – Items 1 to 4 only

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

S Brannon	Assistant Director of Planning
G Carpenter	Assistant Director Public Protection
R Cottee	Principal Revenues Officer
S Brannon	Assistant Director of Planning
P Linfield	Director for Finance and Corporate Services
S Soar	Democratic Services Officer
S Whittaker	Assistant Director of Finance

1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received for Councillor Barney with Councillor Ellis attending as substitute.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded the Group of restrictions placed on Councillors to participate in items relating to Council Tax if they themselves were in two months or more arrears in paying Council Tax.

Councillor Hetvi Parekh noted her employment at Nottinghamshire County Council which included foster families within Children's Services. Councillor Parekh stated her employment did not have any impact in terms of the policies decided by the fostering service or the commissioning or strategy of fostering policies in Nottinghamshire. Councillor Parekh wanted to note this for clarity and avoid any confusion.

3 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 April 2026**

The minutes of the previously meeting 2 April 2026 were approved unanimously by the Group which were then signed by the Chair.

4 **Council Tax Policy Changes (2nd homes premium and discounts for terminally ill residents and foster carers)**

The Chair began the discussion by reading out the purpose of the report and the recommendation of this report to the Group. The Chair decided to split the discussion for this item into the three sections and vote separately on the A, B and C elements of the Recommendation.

Rushcliffe Borough Council's Revenue Manager led a presentation which outlined the current context of the Authority's Second Homes Premium. This included both a brief history and the statutory bases for the policy, as well as the policy's implementation at the Authority from April 2025. The Revenue Manager provided the Group with some key information which was aimed at showing an overview of the policy's performance.

The Revenue Manager noted the following:

- Applies a 100% Council Tax premium to qualifying second homes
- 175 properties have been subject to the premium at some stage
- 121 properties currently liable for the premium
- 72 properties have remained continuously classed as second homes
- 54 properties have had the premium removed since April 2025
- Generated £576,000 in additional Council Tax income over two years; note this is subject to the usual precepts, for example, to the upper-tier council, fire and police authorities.

The Revenue Manager also noted the £576,000 was the total figure of Council Tax collected by the Authority as the collecting authority, but that this number, as with all Council Tax raised, was split between the various precepts, e.g. the upper-tier authority, Police and Fire etc.

The Revenue Manager noted the officers' view, and recommendation was to continue the Second Homes Premium. Officers formed this view as the policy had had a positive impact on bringing long-term unoccupied properties into use, coupled with additional Council Tax revenue. The Revenue Manager also noted the earliest the premium could be removed was from 1 April 2027.

Following the presentation the Group had a wide discussion on the topic, which allowed it to clarify its understanding of what a second home was classed as, and its difference with other policy areas such as empty homes.

The Director for Finance reaffirmed the officers' view that this policy was linked to bringing more houses back into use and noted the evidence presented did not show justification for removing the Second Homes Premium.

Councillors asked different questions related to the various housing types this policy impacted, for example, family homes, holiday homes, renovations, homes people used for work or people changing what their main residence was. It was confirmed the Council did not hold data on any subcategories. The Revenue Manager also confirmed the Council had not collected any feedback from impacted residents. The Revenue Manager went on to confirm that within the presentation no enforcement or administrative costs had been included. The Revenue Manager advised that within the presentation no enforcement or administrative costs were included as those were incorporated within the overall costs of the Revenues Team, with enforcement costs recovered separately.

Prior to the vote, Councillors Matthews and Parekh noted their intention to support revoking the policy as they did not believe that the policy had demonstrated it had achieved its stated objectives and felt that the revenue of roughly £20,000 did not justify keeping the policy. Councillor Grocock stated that he supported the officer position and believed the policy supported other authorities, such as the County Council, not just Rushcliffe.

Councillor Virdi, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, summarised the discussion, and emphasised the following points:

- Highlighted that the lack of clarity regarding the policy showed it was not reaching its desired objectives.
- Questioned the robustness of the evidence and links between the policy and bringing homes back into use.
- Clarified the policy was not put into place for revenue generation.
- Net revenue, when compared with officer time, casework and enforcement activity, would be small.

On Item A, the Group voted, through a split vote, with six members voting to revoke the policy and three voting to keep the policy, and it was therefore **RESOLVED** that it be RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the policy be REVOKED.

The Revenue Manager then led a presentation regarding Council Tax relief for terminally ill residents. The Revenue Manager noted the policy's history and that this was a local discretionary Council Tax relief scheme. The Revenue Manager updated the Group on the details of the scheme, including an option to provide relief of up to 100%, and also explained the eligibility criteria. The Revenue Manager highlighted the estimated number of residents that would be eligible for the scheme at any given time. The Revenue Manager noted that as the billing authority, Rushcliffe would have to fund the whole cost of this relief.

Councillors spoke in support of the sentiment of the policy whilst also asking questions related to the logistics of the application of the scheme. Councillors requested clarity on how long people would be eligible and whether there was a phasing back in process of full Council Tax once the terminally ill person died. The Revenue Manager noted that the scheme would be applicable to people who were in receipt of Council Tax Support and that this relief would be applied for 52 weeks.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services also noted, when questioned, that there was always a cut-off point in a scheme like this where there would be some residents that just missed out, but they believed using the Council Tax Support Scheme was an appropriate way of managing eligibility and ensured the scheme was affordable based on the information provided.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Group unanimously supported this policy being RECOMMENDED to Cabinet.

The Revenue Manager gave a presentation to the Group which related to Council Tax relief for Foster Carers in Rushcliffe Borough. Currently, there are 12 Foster Carers in Rushcliffe. This relief would therefore cost the authority roughly £27,000 a year. The Revenue Manager noted that other councils across Nottinghamshire had begun to consider similar approaches.

The Revenue Manager outlined the officer's viewpoint and recommendation that this scheme should wait until Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) took place in Nottinghamshire before being enacted. The Revenue Manager highlighted various options, including 100%, 75% or 50% relief and whether the Authority should fund 100% or 50% funded through Nottinghamshire County Council, for example. The Revenue Manager noted some potential risks related to the scheme, including if there was a significant uptake in the number of Foster Carers in Rushcliffe.

In response to the presentation Councillors praised the great work and benefit that foster families gave not only to the people they fostered but to the wider community. There were, however, differing opinions on whether Foster Carers were an appropriate group to receive such relief. Some Councillors noted that Foster Carers already received an income or allowance for being a Foster Carer. Councillor Matthews, asked whether there was any evidence that Foster Carers struggled paying their Council Tax. The Director of Finance abd Corporate Services noted the intention of the policy would be to attract more Foster Carers but also noted that it was not proven that it would be enough of an incentive.

Councillor Grocock supported the introduction of the scheme and emphasised the need to try new schemes like this to address a national shortage of Foster Carers. Councillor Parekh supported Councillor Grocock's comments and added the amount it would cost Rushcliffe Borough Council was a nominal amount, and noted the costs, relatively, were significantly higher to place a child in care.

The Group, through a split vote, voted AGAINST the officers' recommendation to postpone this policy until after LGR. Instead, the Group, through a split vote of seven to two, voted to RECOMMEND introducing this policy prior to LGR. Following another split vote of six to three, the Group voted to RECOMMEND a 100% tax relief for Foster Carers as the Group's recommendation to Cabinet.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group considered and provided feedback to Cabinet on:

A) Second Homes Council Tax Premium:
The proposal to revoke the Second Homes Premium or any amendments that the Group consider appropriate.

B) Council Tax Relief for households with a terminally ill resident:
The proposed Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme to support households who live with a terminally ill family member, as set out at Appendix B to the report, including eligibility criteria; affordability, prudence and sustainability within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy ("MTFS").

C) Foster Carer Council Tax Relief:
The proposed Discretionary Council Tax Relief Scheme as set out in Appendix C to the report including eligibility criteria and level of support and its

affordability, prudence and sustainability within the MTFS.

5 **Article 4**

This Item was introduced and presented by the Assistant Director of Planning. The presentation covered an overview of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) definitions, licensing requirements and planning controls. The presentation noted the current position in Rushcliffe, which was that HMOs accommodating seven or more occupants required planning permission. It was also noted that an Article 4 Direction removed permitted development rights and required a planning application but did not automatically prevent development.

The Group was advised, during the presentation, that there were currently 188 licensed HMOs in Rushcliffe and that the number of HMOs occupied by three or four people was unknown as licensing was not required. The Group was also advised that a commissioned study by Rushcliffe Borough Council suggested there were likely to be a further 175 HMOs, although this data was not verified. Of those unverified HMOs, it was thought that 91 were in West Bridgford. It was also noted that HMO concentrations were predominantly within West Bridgford, particularly along key arterial routes.

In summarising the current context, officers noted that complaints were mostly related to noise, with a small number relating to antisocial behaviour. It was also noted that Nottinghamshire County Council reported very few parking complaints directly linked to HMOs and that current evidence did not demonstrate significant harm, or risk of harm, to local amenity or wellbeing.

Following the presentation, Councillors asked questions and raised some concerns, including regarding the concentration of HMOs across West Bridgford and Trent Bridge. Councillors shared concerns from their own wards, including the impact on local communities and the character of neighbourhoods, as well as the impact on family homes, both in terms of access to family homes and the availability of family housing stock in certain areas, and the impact on families living in areas with high concentrations of HMOs.

Councillors specifically asked to be provided with local and national examples of where Article 4 implementation had taken place and officers advised that implementation was generally in city areas and gave Bolton as an example.

Councillors commented on complaints received relating to HMOs and whether the figures quoted accurately reflected residents’ concerns. Councillors noted that residents might experience fatigue from complaining, which would be compounded if they saw little noticeable action resulting from their complaints. Similarly, Councillors noted that residents might direct their complaints to other bodies, such as the relevant universities.

Councillors also considered what other tools or levers existed within the planning system to mitigate their current concerns. It was noted that there were no such policy options that would address the issues raised by Councillors.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Communities Scrutiny Group had scrutinised the contents of the report and the conclusions as set out in paragraphs 4.27 to 4.30, and the Group decided to provide an additional recommendation.

The Group had differing views on the evidence and whether it was sufficient to progress an Article 4 Direction. The Group then discussed a further recommendation which better reflected the Group's concerns. The Group voted in favour of the new recommendation.

It was additionally **RESOLVED** that further investigative work be undertaken to establish whether an Article 4 Direction could be justified within smaller neighbourhood areas of West Bridgford. This was voted on and received unanimous support from the Group.

6 **Work Programme**

It is **RESOLVED** that the Group agreed the work programme as set out below:

15 October 2026
• Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
• Work Programme

21 January 2027
• Review of debt collection agents by RBC in line with the outcome of the Government’s consultation on Council Tax and Enforcement
• Road Sweeping
• Work Programme

15 April 2027
• Work Programme

xx July 2027
• Carbon Management Plan Update
• Work Programme

ACTIONS

Minute Number	Action	Officer Responsible
5	Provide local and nation examples of where Article 4 has been used in different contexts	Assistant Director of Planning
4	Provide details of how the Council Tax Support scheme is funded from national government.	Revenue Manager

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm.

CHAIR