

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY GROUP
WEDNESDAY, 15 JULY 2026**

Held at 7.00 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 T Combellack (Chair), J Billin (Vice-Chair), R Bird, A Brown, S Calvert, J Chaplain, S Ellis, D Mason and H Parekh as a substitute

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

T Newman-Taylor – Chief Executive Officer – East Midlands Freeport
P Channing – Redevelopment Manager - Uniper

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

T Coop	Democratic Services Officer
C Prendergast	Assistant Director Growth, Property and Projects

APOLOGIES:

Councillors R Walker

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 March 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026 were approved and signed by the Chair.

3 Freeport Update

Mr Newman-Taylor, Chief Executive Officer of East Midlands Freeport updated the Group on the progress since its June 2025 meeting. He reported that the Freeport had moved from establishing its framework to delivery, although infrastructure and utilities remained critical to the pace of the development.

The Group was informed that East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) is now the accountable body for the Freeport. A Business Plan for 2026-31 had been approved, an Investment Strategy had been published and investor interest remained strong.

Progress across the three tax sites

Ratcliffe on Soar site: an amendment to the Local development Order (LDO) had been approved, a demolition contractor had been appointed and investors

had expressed interest.

East Midlands Airport and Gateway Industrial Cluster (EMAGIC): more than 850 jobs and £150m of investment had been delivered.

East Midlands Intermodal Park (EMIP): the business case was progressing, a memorandum of understanding had been agreed with Toyota and investors had expressed interest.

Transport and Infrastructure

Mr Newman-Taylor reported that the M1 Junction 24 remained the principal constraint affecting the Ratcliffe on Soar redevelopment, EMAGIC and growth across the wider Trent Arc. Since July 2025 discussions had continued with the Department of Transport and National Highways, with further modelling, options development and phased delivery planning under way. EMCCA was also supporting a wider programme intended to provide an integrated transport solution.

The Group was advised that delivery was expected to require a combination of public and private sector funding. A government engagement event had been held in Parliament earlier in the year and had produced an encouraging response.

The Group also noted that the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the southern area of the Ratcliffe on Soar site had been adopted.

The Chair asked whether the recent funding cuts for new road schemes and the decision not to extend HS2 would have any impact on the freeport. Mr Newman-Taylor reported the East Midlands Mayors frustration and advised that the Government might support a scheme where private investment and freeport contributions could be leveraged. There was, however, no indication that a rail link to the airport would be delivered anytime soon.

Community Engagement

Councillor Brown, a member of the East Midlands Airport Advisory Board said that the M1 Junction 24 had been discussed at great length over many years. He expressed frustration that local communities were not always consulted or considered, citing recent disruption to local traffic caused by bridge-repair road closures. The Chair agreed with Councillor Brown that local communities should be consulted on matters affecting them.

The Assistant Director for Growth, Property and Projects advised that parish and borough councillors were represented on the Ratcliffe on Soar Community Forum, which the Freeport and Uniper attend and where local issues can be raised. Councillor Parekh remained concerned that local wards were not being consulted. Councillor Billin also highlighted the significant effect that road closures associated with improvements to junction 24 could have on local roads and communities.

Mr Newman-Taylor Acknowledged the Groups concerns. He explained that J24 was complex but considered that the Freeport was well placed to address the challenge and that progress was being made.

The Chair asked that the East Midlands Freeport acknowledge councillors concerns about the potential effect of work at Junction 24 on local communities and requested feedback be provided to the Group. Councillor Calvert asked whether Rushcliffe's representative on the East Midlands Freeport Board, Councillor Neil Clarke, could share information more widely with borough councillors. Councillor Brown advised he held a consultative position on the EMCCA Stakeholder Group. Councillor Parekh asked officers to review the terms of reference for the Ratcliffe on Soar Community Forum and consider extending membership to the wider community.

Skills, communities and engagement

Mr Newman-Taylor reported on the Freeports work around skills, communities and engagement, highlighting three pilot schemes delivered during the first half of 2026.

Road to Logistics: 10 participants received HGV training and wraparound support

Primary Engineer: 17 schools participated, with an average of 72 entries per school

Primary Vehicle Engineer: training was delivered to 20 schools.

The Group noted that the first public Freeport Board was scheduled to be held at Rushcliffe Arena on Friday 25 July 2026.

Members asked which schools had been targeted and whether higher education and universities were also being considered. Mr Newman-Taylor explained that the Freeport was initially focusing on areas where smaller scale support could add value, while EMCCA could consider skills needs across the wider region and within higher education. The Group were advised that the Freeport currently employed 3 intern positions

Mr Canning representing Uniper added that the universities in Nottingham and Derby provided a strong engineering skills base capable of supporting prospective commercial investment.

Ratcliffe on Soar site

Mr Canning presented an update on preparations for the demolition of Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station. Site preparation was progressing at pace. The tender process for the demolition contract had been completed, and ERITH Group was expected to take control of the site in October 2026, with demolition due to be completed by 2030.

Preparatory work included matters relating to the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015 (COMAH), pre-demolition activity, environment and technical surveys and remedial work to remove remaining ash from the southern part of the site.

Mr Canning welcomed approval of the amended LDO, which would provide opportunities for higher-value investment of the northern part of the site and for

EMCCA led AI growth zones and data centres to the south. The Group also noted that the Borough Council had approved the biodiversity proposals.

Uniper was leading the preparation of a Masterplan of the Ratcliffe on Soar Site A review had been commissioned to confirm viability and help attract investors. Regional partners and stakeholders, including Rushcliffe Borough Council, were active consultees. Mr Canning also reported discussions with National Grid about repurposing grid connections. Uniper had reapplied for distribution connections to help accelerate development.

In response to the Chair's questions about the remaining ash and whether more coal had been present than expected, Mr Canning said that only small traces of coal had been found and these had been cleared.

Councillor Billin and Calvert asked whether all cooling towers would be demolished and when this was likely to happen. Mr Canning advised that the towers were structurally fragile and expensive to maintain, and demolition was not expected before 2029.

Councillor Chaplain asked whether an incinerator remained possible on the site. She also asked whether Mr Canning was satisfied with the pace of progress and what factors had caused delay. Mr Canning explained that work on an incinerator had paused but would be reconsidered through the developing masterplan. He explained that development of a site of this scale was challenging and has been affected by external factors, including HS2, the War in Ukraine, Covid and changes of Government. Uniper was nevertheless content with the programme and its partnership with Rushcliffe Borough Council.

Mr Newman-Taylor added that eight other former power-station sites across the country were also seeking development investment. Such sites were highly complex and could take decades to redevelop. He emphasised the scale of Uniper's commitment and investment.

Councillor Mason echoed ward councillors concerns about the freeport and Ratcliffe on Soar sites. She emphasised the need for early community engagement and consultation during development of the masterplan, referring to public dissatisfaction with consultation on the strategic development site at Gamston and Tollerton.

Councillor Ellis commented on the scale and complexity of the project and the difficulty of fully understanding the investment required. He did not feel able to reach a judgement but had been encouraged by the information presented.

The Chair suggested it would be useful to have a follow up in 12 months-time for Growth and Development Group to monitor its progress.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group considered the update provided by the EMF at the Committee meeting and identified any further opportunities to be explored and developed.

4 **Work Programme**

The Chair highlighted there were no future scrutiny items on the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group work programme. The Chair suggested that it might be useful if a Freeport update could be scheduled into the work programme in a year's time to provide the group with an update of its progress.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group agree its work programme.

ACTIONS – 15 July 2026

Minute No.	Action	Officer Responsible
4	Councillor Parekh requested that officers consider the Ratcliffe on Soar Community Forum's terms of reference with a recommendation to extend the membership to the wider community	Assistant Director for Growth, Property and Projects

The meeting closed at 8.18 pm.

CHAIR