



MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP
TUESDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2018

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

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chairman), R Inglis (Vice-Chairman), B Buschman, B Cooper, J Donoghue, M Edwards, R Mallender, F Purdue-Horan and J Stockwood

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

D Mitchell

Executive Manager - Communities

D Banks

Executive Manager -
Neighbourhoods

C Taylor

Community Development Manager

Pickering

Principal Officer - Environmental
Protection

Coomber

Armed Forces Covenant
Development Officer (Charnwood,
Melton & Rushcliffe)

T Coop

Constitutional Services Officer

Richardson

Armed Forces Covenant Outreach
Officer (Charnwood, Melton &
Rushcliffe)

APOLOGIES:

Councillors J Greenwood and K Khan

14 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 September 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 September were accepted as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

16 Rural Broadband update

The Executive Manager – Communities welcomed Ceren Clulow – Broadband Project Manager at Nottinghamshire County Council. Ms Clulow provided a presentation on the progress of fibre Broadband delivery in Rushcliffe as part of a three year Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire Programme (BBfN) in

partnership with BT Openreach.

The presentation provided an overview of the BBfN programme and provided information on the progress of contract 2 highlighting the take up of broadband services within Rushcliffe, and the future plans and aspirations for contract 3.

Ms Clulow advised the group that Broadband take up had been better than expected across Nottinghamshire as a whole, providing a greater profit share with BT which the County council would use to re-invest and progress contract 3. Ms Clulow added that BT were currently working on a model for additional coverage with the provision for additional build within Rushcliffe, details of which will be published in March 2019.

Ms Clulow highlighted the economic impact that better Broadband services provide for business start-ups, productivity, innovation and employment. She added that new housing developments were a key element for building on the existing Broadband network and by getting the fibre optic infrastructure in the ground when the utilities were being inserted was essential. She added that contract 3 would include improvements for schools and rural areas with the implementation of subsidised schemes.

Members of the Group asked several specific questions regarding the take up of Broadband in rural areas of the Borough where access to faster Broadband was limited. Members suggested that contacting ward members and Town and Parish Councils to present the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire delivery may help to encourage a greater take up and improve network capacity. Ms Clulow welcomed support from ward members and advised that costs are generally higher in rural communities as properties are further apart, she added that residents could apply for alternative subsidised schemes depending on their location and capacity of the broadband network.

Members questioned the number of cabinets that had been installed and whether there were enough to support future demand. Ms Culow advised that in some areas demand was greater than supply, adding that lessons had been learned and that Outreach were installing larger cabinets so as to future proof any additional demand.

Members of the Group questioned the provision of Broadband for new-builds and asked the Council whether this was a condition of the planning application on new developments. The Executive Manager – Communities advised that it was not a statutory condition and could not be enforced. He did however confirm that with the larger developments, the contractors were making provision for Broadband.

It was RESOLVED that

- a) The report of the Executive Manager – Communities be noted.
- b) The Group be provided with additional information regarding properties where Broadband had not been provided.

17 **Armed Forces Community Covenant**

The Community Development Manager provided a report that summarised the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant, which was adopted by Rushcliffe Borough Council in partnership with Charnwood and Melton Borough Councils' and signed at Full Council in June 2013, and subsequently re-signed in November 2018.

A presentation was given by Victoria Coomber – Armed Forces Covenant Officer for Rushcliffe, Charnwood and Melton Borough Councils' and Zoe Richardson – Outreach Officer for Rushcliffe, Charnwood and Melton Borough Councils'. The presentation focused on recent achievements, findings from a mapping/survey exercise and future work programme priorities.

Ms Coomber explained the Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation to ensure that those who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The Covenant encourages Councils' to support armed forces personnel and promote public understanding and awareness within their communities.

Ms Coomber provided an update on the activities delivered against the initial objectives within the action plan of 2013, these included:

- Signed the 2013 Armed Forces Community Covenant – (Re-signed the Covenant, November 2018)
- Local consortium funding award from the Ministry of Defence - £97K
- Produced & delivered local action plan
- Appointed Armed Forces Covenant Officer and Outreach Officer
- Royal British Legion 'pop-ins'
- Presented 'mapping report findings' to Parish Council Forum and Leadership Team at Rushcliffe Borough Council.
- Achieved the Silver Employer Recognition Award

Ms Coomber continued to update the Group with information received from a mapping report findings exercise and advised that there were an estimated 3052 veterans living in the Borough. She added that currently there was no one database or accurate records for locating armed forces personnel. Ms Coomber confirmed that the Borough does not provide service family accommodation, yet 75 pupils had been identified as receiving the £300 Service Pupil Premium.

Ms Coomber advised the group that work is continuing with the CCG's and the Borough's frontline staff to ask the question and encourage ex-armed service personnel to inform their GP and local authority that they are a veteran, adding that more positive actions are required to make our workplace and communities more reservist friendly and supportive to the wider Armed Forces Community.

Ms Coomber provided an update on the DMRC at Stanford Hall, advising that the facility opened to patients in Autumn 2018, adding that there was an estimated 170 service personnel working there. The Hall is able to treat up to 204 patients at any one time, 104 force generation patients and 100 complex traumas and its estimated that between 8000-15000 patients a year will attend

as an outpatient. She added that the facility provides complete 'wrap around care' for service personnel with the view to them returning to work.

Ms Richardson presented information on the second phase of the Armed Forces Covenant, and confirmed that funding for this phase is secured until March 2020. Ms Richardson explained that his phase was to focus on the hard-to-reach veterans across the Borough, providing service related community mobile hubs. Identifying and working with support organisations to provide specialised armed forces tailored services and working with existing networks and local community groups to link military personnel to support one another.

Ms Richardson concluded in advising the Group most members of the Armed Forces community nationally are healthy, and transition successfully into the civilian world. By undertaking this work we are aiming to reduce those who may experience difficulties and ensuring we have mechanisms in place to identify any emerging trends.

Members considered the report and presentations and congratulated the Officers on the extent of work they had achieved so far and the silver accreditation for Employer Recognition. Members asked specific questions regarding how the Council promoted the Armed Forces Covenant to the wider community and how they shared information, for example; Council website, social media. Ms Coomber advised that work with Rushcliffe Communications team is ongoing, an article for Rushcliffe Reports titled Rushcliffe Remembers this Autumn, has recently been mailed to all residents across the Borough. There was also lots of social media activity covering Armistice and Remembrance Sunday. Ms Coomber added that the next steps are to develop a media campaign and approach local GP Surgeries, charities such as Age Concern for information on those veterans that are harder to reach.

Members requested that information be shared with ward members, as Councillor's were the 'eyes and ears' in the community and could provide information on veterans in their communities. Ms Coomber welcomed their support.

It was RESOLVED that

- a) the Group note the report of the Executive Manager – Communities;
- b) the group be provided with additional information regarding future activities and progress.

18 Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2018 - 2023

The Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods presented a report which provided the group with a proposal to introduce an Empty Homes Strategy. The draft strategy highlighted how resources could be best utilised to target empty homes within the Borough that would provide positive outcomes, both financially for the Council and for the community as a whole.

The Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods informed the group that around 900 properties had been identified as empty properties and around 375 of these had been empty for more than six months, while nearly 100 of these had been

empty for more than two years. It is the long term empty homes which cause most concern as they are more likely to remain empty, without intervention, and are also likely to be an increasing source of concern and complaint.

The Executive Manger – Neighbourhoods added that Empty Homes are an increasing feature of Central Government Policy, which can be seen through both the New Homes Bonus and recent changes to Council Tax. The benefits of a strategy to deal with empty properties can:

- Assist in meeting housing need;
- Improve housing conditions;
- Assist with a reduction in crime;
- Regenerate blighted areas;
- Increase Council Tax collection rates and empty homes premium;
- Generate additional income through the New Homes Bonus (NHB).

The Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods explained that additional resources would be required to fully implement the action plan and it was considered that initially this could be delivered with a part-time role working 2 to 3 days per week and advised that work is underway to explore if this could be achieved using existing internal resources that could be redirected to this area.

The Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods also explained that there would be costs arising from enforcement action, however any such costs could be reclaimed through the appropriate legal process. He added that there are also opportunities to maximise income via the New Home Bonus (NHB), debt recovery and unclaimed sales income from Enforced Sales.

Members agreed in principle to the draft strategy and supported its development. The Group asked specific questions on what the Council deemed as an empty home, and whether this included commercial properties where there was living accommodation above, which is often left empty.

The Principal Officer - Environmental Protection advised that homes can be left empty for a number of reasons and part of the research behind the strategy is to identify properties that have been empty long term and work with the owners to identify a solution. He added that sometimes ownership of properties can be difficult to identify and there may also be lengthy legal processes to resolve the issue.

Members questioned what data sources were being used to assist in identifying an empty property and whether the council had access to credit checks and credit agencies. Members also advised if Town and Parish Councils could provide information as they often had the depth and Knowledge from local councillors and residents. The Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods advised that the Council does not have access to credit agency data and that research is collected from the Council's Council Tax data and the Utilities. In respect of Town and Parish Councils providing information this was welcomed by Officers.

It is RESOLVED that the report of the Executive Manger – Neighbourhoods endorse the draft Empty Home Strategy.

19 **Work Programme**

The Executive Manager – Communities presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services requesting the Group consider its Work Programme.

The Group questioned the Arts Programme Fund which was raised from the disposal of the Borough Arts Collection and whether a decision had been made for a sculpture. The Executive Manager – Communities advised that no decision had been made as yet.

The Group requested feedback from the Council's recent Scrutiny Review. The Executive Manager – Communities advised that the Report had not been received yet. It was agreed that the Group would receive a report regarding the Council's Scrutiny Review.

It was RESOLVED that the Work Programme as detailed below be approved.

26 February 2019

- Tree Protection and Promotion in Rushcliffe Update
- Diversity in Rushcliffe
- Work Programme

ACTION SHEET

Community Development Group – Tuesday 20 November 2018

Minute Item	Action	Officer Responsible
16	All Ward Members be provided with additional information regarding properties that were not signed up to Broadband across the Borough	Executive Manager – Communities
17	The Group be provided with information regarding encouraging GP practises to provide information on veterans and armed forces personnel	Victoria Coomber – Armed Forces Covenant Officer
17	Members are provided with the number ex-service personnel employed by the Council	Executive Manager – Communities and HR
19	Members requested that the Council put pressure on National Government regarding SIPP rules on residential property to free up accommodation above shops	Executive Manager - Neighbourhoods

The meeting closed at 9.23 pm.

CHAIRMAN