

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 16 JULY 2020

Held virtually at 7.00 pm and live streamed on the
Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors S Mallender (Chairman), T Combellack (Vice-Chairman), R Adair, S Bailey, B Bansal, K Beardsall, N Begum, A Brennan, B Buschman, R Butler, N Clarke, J Cottee, G Dickman, A Edyvean, M Gaunt, P Gowland, B Gray, L Healy, L Howitt, R Inglis, Mrs C Jeffreys, R Jones, A Major, R Mallender, D Mason, G Moore, J Murray, A Phillips, F Purdue-Horan, S J Robinson, D Simms, J Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, G Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Executive Manager - Transformation
C Caven-Attack	Service Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
T Coop	Democratic Services Officer
K Marriott	Chief Executive
S Sull	Monitoring Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager
L Webb	Democratic Services Officer
S Whittaker	Financial Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors K Shaw

11 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 2 July 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

13 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor informed Councillors that she had attended two engagements in the 14 days since taking office. She had the pleasure of opening the Lady Bay Open Garden's event virtually from her own garden and attended a socially distanced 100th Birthday Street Party in Rempstone.

14 Leader's Announcements

The Leader notified Council that he and the Chief Executive had recently met with representatives of the Boundary Commission who would be undertaking a

review of Rushcliffe later in the year. They would be looking at the number of councillors, size of wards, and the physical boundaries of wards.

The Leader informed Council that officers were now receiving regular updates on Covid-19 infection rates within the county, which would enable the Council to react quickly if there was a local spike such as that seen recently in Leicester. He went on to reassure Council that although the hospitality and retail sectors had been badly hit by the lockdown, the Council was working hard to support them in reopening and continuing to operate. The Leader confirmed that the Council's leisure centres would be opening with a phased approach from 25 July 2020, and that officers were working closely with Parkwood and Mitie to allow users through the doors as quickly and safely as possible.

The Leader also paid tribute to Councillor Ron Hetherington who had resigned recently due to ill health. Councillor Hetherington had played a considerable role in the Council over several years, as part of the Cabinet and various scrutiny groups. He had been elected Mayor, and had represented his wards in East Leake and, more recently, Sutton Bonington.

15 **Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive made no announcements.

16 **Citizens' Questions**

There were no questions.

17 **Business from the last Council meeting**

Notices of Motions

The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor R Mallender.

“Having regard to the extent of approved building in Rushcliffe and evidence of non-compliance by developers, the Council will review its planning enforcement policy with a view to increasing efforts to enforce compliance with approved plans, conditions and Council planning documents in conjunction with the Growth Scrutiny Group and report any recommendations back to Cabinet.”

Councillor Jones highlighted that, since he had first submitted this motion in March 2020, a review of planning enforcement had been programmed for the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group. He explained that many residents wanted to stay in the Borough and that planning applications for home renovations continued to be submitted. He outlined his concerns regarding the Council's use of its planning enforcement powers including investigations and prosecutions. Councillor Jones reminded the Council that there would be a 28% increase in house building across the Borough in the next few years but that, as far as he was aware, there had not been a commensurate increase in staff for enforcement. There were two planning enforcement officers and for a significant period of last year, this had fallen to one officer, which was an

alarmingly fragile situation. Councillor Jones gave a number of examples from his own ward where he felt there had been insufficient planning enforcement to protect residents' quality of life. He concluded that the Council focused on bringing forward development but needed to focus equally on compliance with planning conditions and enforcement when those were not adhered to.

Councillor R Mallender reminded Council that its role in terms of planning did not end with the approval of an application. Enforcement was essential to ensure that work was undertaken in accordance with the approved plans. He stated that it was necessary to have the resources, means to monitor, and follow-up on reported breaches to ensure that existing residents and amenities were not harmed by new developments.

Councillor Upton stated that he did not have the enforcement statistics to hand, and offered to respond to Councillor Jones with this information within the week. He considered that it was important to achieve a balance in terms of resourcing enforcement and that two officers, given the amount of development within the Borough, was considered sufficient. He also remarked that Councillor Jones' suggestion that all developers were not complying was disingenuous. Councillor Upton proposed an amendment to the motion:

“Having regard to the amount of approved building for Rushcliffe and evidence of non-compliance with planning conditions by some developers, this Council supports a review of its planning enforcement policy through the task on the current work programme for the Growth Scrutiny Group and any recommendations will be reported back to Cabinet.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Clarke, who reserved his right to speak.

Councillor Gray agreed that the amendment encapsulated the spirit of original motion and he noted that there was expected to be considerable growth in the Borough over next ten years, and that effective planning enforcement would be essential to supporting the Council's corporate priorities. He called upon scrutiny to consider whether the Council's resourcing levels for planning enforcement were correct. Councillor Gray reminded Council that natural assets were easily removed; however, they could take decades to be established if later replaced.

Councillor Thomas indicated her support for the amendment to the motion.

Councillor Clarke highlighted his support for the sentiment of the original motion but advised Council that it was a shame that it needed to be discussed at the meeting, as it had been included on the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group work programme for some time. Councillor Clarke reminded Councillor Jones that he was welcome to present his investigation at the scrutiny meeting.

Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Clarke for his invitation to speak at scrutiny regarding the impact of planning enforcement in his ward.

After being put to the vote, the amendment to the motion was carried.

The Mayor then read out the substantive motion.

“Having regard to the amount of approved building for Rushcliffe and evidence of non-compliance with planning conditions by some developers, this Council supports a review of its planning enforcement policy through the task on the current work programme for the Growth Scrutiny Group and any recommendations will be reported back to Cabinet.”

In debating the substantive motion, Councillor Thomas reminded the Council that prompt planning enforcement action was required on issues raised, to avoid creating a culture that gaining retrospective permission was easier than applying for permission prior to any changes being made. She considered that enforcement action was necessary to maintain public confidence in the planning system and she requested the scrutiny group to consider if staffing levels were commensurate with levels of development planned for the Borough.

There was no further debate on the substantive motion. On being put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried.

Questions from Councillors

a) Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Mason

“Do any of the Council’s Contact Centres enable EU nationals and their family members to book an appointment to use the digital document verification service for European Settlement as part of their application for settled or pre-settled status thus enabling applicants to retain their passports/biometric residence cards instead of having to post them to the Home Office?”

Councillor Mason responded that Nottinghamshire County Council lead on the EU Settlement Scheme and those wishing to apply could seek information from the County Council’s website. She suggested that Councillor Jones should refer to the County Council for further details about the scheme.

Supplementary question

Councillor Jones asked if Councillor Mason knew if the County Council allowed applicants to use the digital document verification scheme?

Councillor Mason replied that Councillor Jones should make that enquiry of the County Council, as they were the lead for the EU Settlement Scheme.

b) Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Upton

“In view of the research by Queen Mary University Hospital of London and others which established beyond doubt that exposure to levels of particulate 2.5 greater than 10 per cubic metre results in changes to the structure of the heart; would you ask the Local Development Framework to consider adopting the World Health Organisations

guidelines of no more than 10 per cubic metre instead of the much higher level of 25 in current planning applications?”

Councillor Upton responded that the new Environment Bill was proposing to bring in a number of changes to current air quality legislation including new requirements to monitor and tackle particulate 2.5. When that becomes law, Council guidance, plans and policies would require amendment to reflect any new legislative requirements.

Supplementary question

Councillor Jones asked if the WHO guidelines could be recommended to the Council's LDF group regardless of the content of the new Bill.

Councillor Upton replied that it would be prudent to wait for the new Bill to be published to avoid wasted or duplicated effort and he advised that it was likely that the Bill would be published soon.

c) Question from Councillor Thomas to Councillor Upton

“In light of the fact that East Leake is bathed in sewage whenever there is heavy rainfall, are you able to explain how Rushcliffe ensures that Severn Trent Water meets its responsibility to increase the capacity of its sewerage systems to deal with the cumulative additional demands of new homes and other development?”

Councillor Upton responded that the Council consulted Severn Trent on applications for major developments. The Water Industry Act 1991 imposed a continuing duty on all sewerage undertakers to provide, maintain and improve its systems for collecting and treating foul and wastewater drainage to effectually drain its areas and effectually deal with the contents of its sewers. The developer had the absolute right to connect to the public sewerage system under section 106 of the Water Industry Act. Any improvements considered necessary to improve existing capacity at the pumping station or Sewage Treatment works, would be undertaken by Severn Trent, under their separate legal obligations.

Councillor Upton advised that the Council, through the East Leake Growth Board, had engaged Severn Trent on those issues and there was an ongoing dialogue to ensure, a solution was found to the localised flooding in East Leake. Severn Trent had recently completed a sewer flow monitoring exercise for East Leake, which would be feed back into the East Leake Growth Board.

Supplementary question

Councillor Thomas asked when those improvements might be made given the amount of development in the village and the extent of the problem with sewage and flooding.

Councillor Upton replied that he was not aware of the timescales but that as Councillor Thomas was a member of the East Leake Growth

Board then, perhaps, that would be the place to raise her question.

d) **Question from Councillor Gowland to Councillor Upton**

“By becoming a Councillor I have learnt that Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board are experts at managing drainage dykes and ditches efficiently and effectively, and at a recent meeting they stated that they are open to considering adopting drainage channels on new developments. It seems preferable to have essential drainage dealt with by a statutory body, rather than leaving it to the vagaries of management companies. What are the advantages and disadvantages to RBC of asking Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board to adopt drainage-ways upstream, downstream or through new developments, possibly using money from CIL, Section 106 or developers?”

Councillor Upton responded that it was important to emphasise that the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board was not responsible for the maintenance of all water courses/drainage ditches in the Rushcliffe area. However, it was consulted on major planning applications and it also identified certain applications themselves through publicity exercises. That was the opportunity for them to raise their interest in future management and maintenance of any watercourses. Drainage was a very complicated issue and the Council had very limited responsibilities.

Supplementary question

No supplementary question was asked.

e) **Question from Councillor Gaunt to Councillor Upton**

“The 21% of new homes built in the flood zone in Rushcliffe was the highest for anywhere in Nottinghamshire. The Environment Agency, The Labour Party and even Boris Johnson in his election campaign have all categorically stated that building on flood plains should be halted. Will the Council pledge to call an immediate halt to all building on flood plains in the Borough?”

Councillor Upton responded that Rushcliffe was building more homes than most councils were and there were several flood zones in the Borough. All sites allocated in the Local Plan were scrutinised and the Planning Inspectorate had made no adverse comments. As far as the Council was aware, none of the Borough's new housing sites built in the last five years had suffered significant flooding.

All planning applications in any flood zone were subject to a flood risk assessment and those for new dwellings in flood zone 2 and 3 were consulted on with the Environment Agency. Major schemes were also subject to consultation with the County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority. Councillor Upton considered that there were sufficient procedures in place to deal with this issue.

Supplementary question

Councillor Gaunt asked whether an up-to-date assessment could be produced in light of recent flooding in the Borough and increasing concerns over climate change.

Councillor Upton replied that this would not be the responsibility of the Council but the Environment Agency and Nottinghamshire County Council as the Lead Flood agency. He reiterated that to his knowledge there had been no flooding on new housing estates in the Borough.

18 **Asset Management Plan**

The Portfolio Holder for Business and Economic Growth presented the report of the Executive Manager – Transformation, which detailed how the Council would manage its assets over the next five years. The Portfolio Holder noted that the Council owned a variety of assets, which included community assets such as community centres, parks and open space serving the residents of the Borough, through to commercial and investment property, providing income to the Council and accommodation for local businesses. The Asset Management Strategy would assist the Council to ensure that properties were fit for purpose; set out efficient management strategies, to use land and buildings to stimulate regeneration, growth and improvement to the local place; encourage new business to the area; and also aligned the management of the asset portfolio across the organisation, considering individual service needs and strategies, ensuring a holistic and comprehensive ‘one Council’ approach. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Asset Management Plan set out how the above would be delivered and was embedded within the Asset Management Strategy. The Strategy would be a living document with on-going activities and projects that would be aligned to the Council’s priorities.

The Portfolio Holder was pleased to note that the Council’s assets provided great value for the wellbeing of its residents as well as providing a financial income for the Council and noted that amendments to the strategy had been made to emphasise this.

The report was moved by Councillor Edyvean and seconded by Councillor Moore who reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Gaunt thanked officers for producing such a comprehensive document, including a sensible and responsible strategy, which provided good returns for residents. The Asset Management Plan would ensure that rental income for the Council would stay within local communities, and thereby increase wealth locally. Councillor Gaunt was pleased to note that the Council was supporting local businesses by providing stability and good value for money and he considered that the Council should promote the strategy to parish councils, as they too could acquire assets through the ‘general powers of competence’ which was introduced by the Localism Act (2011).

Councillor Gaunt believed that the asset challenge process, in which an asset could be re-purposed or disposed of if it was not performing effectively and efficiently should be thoroughly scrutinised, with public consultation, before a decision was made regarding a community asset, as it was important that community owned investments should be maintained for future generations.

Councillor Jones was pleased to note the amendments that had been made to the Strategy and agreed that the priorities of the Council were important. He stated that the Council's assets should increase resident's quality of life through the community facilities that they could access, including green spaces. Councillor Jones hoped that community owned facilities such as allotments would increase for new residents to use, as many now lived in accommodation with smaller gardens.

Councillor R Mallender supported the Asset Management Strategy and explained that the Council held a wide range of assets from a temporary accommodation lodge to community halls, which were publically owned for the benefit of its residents. He noted the importance of ensuring that these investments were well maintained and looked after wisely for future generations. Councillor R Mallender was pleased to note that the Carbon Reduction Management Plan formed an integral part in the management of the Council's assets.

Councillor Thomas thanked the officers for their hard work in producing the Asset Management Strategy and for making amendments to the Strategy prior to the meeting; however, she was concerned that the Strategy was too focused on managing assets for financial gain rather than for social and economic benefits for residents and protecting the environment. Councillor Thomas also noted the Council's commitment to investing within the Borough and hoped that there would be no additional investments outside of the Borough, as the benefits for local residents would be minimal. Councillor Thomas also raised concerns about the asset challenge process and hoped that there would be greater emphasis on public consultation and opinion.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council was proud of its record of investing in the Borough and referred to the renovation of Bridgford Hall and the regeneration of Cotgrave Town Centre, in which residents had benefitted from new community facilities.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Asset Management Strategy and associated Asset Management Plan be adopted.

19 **Revisions to the Council's Constitution**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Monitoring Officer that outlined revisions to the Constitution. Councillor Robinson reminded Councillors that the Constitution was a live, working document that was reviewed continually throughout the year. The amendments outlined in the report were mainly due to changes in the law over the last twelve months and those required to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. All amendments to the Constitution were listed in the document to make it clear what had been amended. Councillor Robinson informed Council that the Governance Scrutiny Group would be considering further improvements to the Constitution at their meeting at the end of the month and any suggestions should be put forward to the Chairman, Councillor Purdue-Horan.

The report was moved by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor

Mason.

Councillor Gray reported that he had reviewed the changes with great interest and was looking forward to participating in the scrutiny exercise later in the month. Councillors Jones, R Mallender and Thomas advised that they were all happy to support the recommendations outlined in the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revisions to the Council's Constitution be approved and that the revised scrutiny arrangements be formally adopted.

20 Notices of Motion

- a. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor J Walker and seconded by Councillor Bansal.

"We call on this Council to actively support alternative forms of transport into Nottingham, in particular cycling, and ask that a detailed piece of work is undertaken by Scrutiny and reported back to Cabinet on improvements that could be made to the cycling network and infrastructure in Rushcliffe using the newly available funds from Central Government."

Councillor J Walker, in moving the motion, reminded the Council that its tagline was; 'Great Place, Great Lifestyle, Great Sport'. That tagline encapsulated all that the Council wanted to work towards for its residents, but it needed to be more than just a tagline. The most recent Cycling Strategy published by the Authority dated back to 1995 and she questioned how the Council expected developers to plan for sustainable cycling routes if the Council did not make it clear what it required. Councillor Walker considered that the Borough had been let down by Nottinghamshire County Council this week in relation to provision for cycle paths within the Borough. The County had come 75th out of 78 local authorities in bidding for funding to help people walk or cycle during the Covid-19 pandemic and keep public transport free for those that have no alternative transport. The County Council had only been awarded £260,000 out of a total of £573,000 available. Councillor Walker stated that she would like the Council to develop a document to complement the County Council's Cycling Strategy, which linked new developments through to existing infrastructure and she believed that scrutiny was the right forum for that to happen.

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

Councillor Clarke strongly supported the need to encourage cycling within the Borough; however, he considered that it would be misplaced to ask scrutiny to develop a Rushcliffe Strategy. Councillor Clarke advised that he would prefer to see a more joined up and collaborative approach in partnership with the County Council, as the Highways Authority. Scrutiny should not be used for issues over which the Borough Council had no control. Councillor Clarke reminded all Councillors that they could lobby their County Councillors to make improvements to the cycling network within the Borough. He highlighted that further funding under the same scheme was being made available in the coming week. Councillor Clarke proposed an amendment to the motion:

“This Council supports alternative forms of transport in and around Rushcliffe, in particular cycling, and will strive to work with Nottinghamshire County Council, as Highway Authority, to identify improvements that could be made to the cycling network in Rushcliffe.”

Councillor Cottee seconded the amendment and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Gray advised that the substantive part of the original motion was to work with Nottinghamshire County Council as the Highways Authority. He did not believe that the phrase ‘strive to work’ had the same emphasis and consequently he would not be supporting the amendment as he considered that it diluted the original motion.

Councillor Jones confirmed that he was in favour of the spirit of original motion and was pleased to hear Councillor Clarke’s commitment to improving the cycling network. He advised that he would be happy to support the amendment if the word ‘actively’ was inserted before strive as he considered that best intentions fall foul when trying to work with the County Council. Councillor Jones proposed the following amendment to the amendment:

“This Council supports alternative forms of transport in and around Rushcliffe, in particular cycling, and will actively strive to work with Nottinghamshire County Council, as Highway Authority, to identify improvements that could be made to the cycling network in Rushcliffe.”

Councillor Gaunt seconded the amendment to the amendment. He stated that the Cycling Strategy was very old and he did not see why the Council could not make new plans, which reflected the current position. He considered that the inclusion of the word ‘actively’ made the statement an action and therefore held the Council accountable.

Councillor Gowland stated that collaborating with the County Council was not sufficient and added that the Council was best placed to understand the needs of cyclists in Rushcliffe.

Councillor Jones concluded that the motion needed energy behind it to capitalise on the benefits of the pandemic in terms of people choosing to use alternative forms of transport.

There was no further debate. After being put to the vote, the amendment to the amendment was lost.

The debate returned to the first amendment.

Councillor R Mallender stated that everyone needed to play a part in creating neighbourhoods that were not exclusively reliant on cars. The Borough required a decent cycling infrastructure and he called upon those Councillors that also represented the Borough at a County level to create momentum for developing a good cycling network throughout the Borough.

Councillor Way stated that she was in favour of the original motion, as it enabled the community to build upon the benefits lockdown had brought to individual's health and to the environment. However, she urged that safety be considered in any development of this kind as combining cyclists with pedestrians could have a life changing impact when things went wrong.

Councillor Robinson stated that he did not believe that the amendment weakened the original motion; in fact, it strengthened the motion for the Borough, as cycling journeys took place between towns and villages as well as into and out of the City and the amendment included travel across the whole of Rushcliffe. He advised that the Borough was represented by its County Councillors, and they were all well placed to bring this change about.

Councillor Cottee thanked Councillor Walker for raising this subject at Council and informed Councillors that the County Council had spent £3.6million in the last three years on cycling routes. £1.4million of this had been in the Borough making significant improvements to the safety of the cycling route from Wheatcroft Island into West Bridgford. The Government had made it clear that it wanted the Highways Authority to develop an integrated cycling and walking infrastructure plan; the County Council was working with other authorities within the D2N2 area to deliver that in a coordinated way.

Councillor Cottee informed Council that the County Council would identify priorities for delivery, as funding opportunities become available, and he encouraged all Councillors to lobby their County Councillors, as further tranches of funding from Government would be forthcoming.

In summing up, Councillor Clarke recognised that more emphasis on safe cycling within the Borough created a better environment for all residents as well as resulting in better neighbourhoods; however, he highlighted that it was essential that a cycle network was created across the Borough and not just in one direction.

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

The Mayor read out the substantive motion.

"This Council supports alternative forms of transport in and around Rushcliffe, in particular cycling, and will strive to work with Nottinghamshire County Council, as Highway Authority, to identify improvements that could be made to the cycling network in Rushcliffe."

Councillor Walker aired her disappointment that the motion as originally proposed had been diluted and, more importantly, used as a political party broadcast on behalf of the County Council. She advised that she had brought forward the motion to create safe spaces for cycling, to allow public transport to be prioritised for those needing it during the pandemic.

In response, Councillor Clarke drew Councillors attention to the fact that the motion now focused upon creating cycle routes within the Borough and working with the County Council instead of spending time on changes that

the Borough Council had no power to bring about.

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

- b. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Gowland and seconded by Councillor Murray.

“We have all probably seen photographs of the flowery, bee friendly waysides that have been planted in Rotherham and have no doubt we have all been asked by residents to achieve the same for our own wards. Rushcliffe Borough Council resolves:

To ask Scrutiny to review the feasibility of sowing native wild flower seeds along the road verges that it manages and put forwards recommendations to the Cabinet.”

In presenting the motion, Councillor Gowland informed Council that the UK had lost 97% of its wildflower meadows in less than a century and that rewilding roadside verges provide the Council with the opportunity to undo some of that damage. In areas where rewilding had already been trialled, fewer cuts have reduced costs to Council, increased biodiversity and contributed towards carbon reduction targets. Councillor Gowland stated that increased time spent in a more natural environment could alter brain development and increase feelings of calm. She called upon Councillors to support the motion, which asked scrutiny to consider the rewilding of road verges in the Borough.

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

Councillor Cottee thanked Councillor Gowland for the motion but informed Council that he could not support it. The motion asked for scrutiny to review the feasibility of sowing wildflowers on verges it managed; however, the Council did not manage any verges in the Borough, Nottinghamshire County Council managed them all. Councillor Cottee reported that the County Council had undertaken trials, but those had not been successful so far. He advised that the County Council had prioritised visibility and safety when it came to roadside verges. Councillor Cottee referred to a document published by the County Council, which had been due to be discussed at the County’s Communities and Place Committee on 2 April 2020. That meeting had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic; however, it was expected it to be considered shortly.

Taking regard of Councillor Cottee’s comments, Councillor Gray proposed an amendment to the motion to replace ‘road verges’ with ‘grassed areas’. The amendment was seconded by Councillor J Walker and accepted by Councillor Gowland. The motion was as follows:

“We have all probably seen photographs of the flowery, bee friendly waysides that have been planted in Rotherham and have no doubt we have all been asked by residents to achieve the same for our own wards. Rushcliffe Borough Council resolves:

To ask Scrutiny to review the feasibility of sowing native wild flower seeds

along the grassed areas that it manages and put forwards recommendations to the Cabinet.”

In responding to the acceptance of the amendment, Councillor Gray asked that scrutiny consider the trialling of wildflower planting in a small number of areas.

Councillor Jones advised that he fully supported the intention of the motion in appropriate areas and would be interested to hear other Councillors' views in terms of action that the Borough Council could take to encourage the Highway Authority to consider rewilding grass verges.

Councillor R Mallender considered that a sensible approach and advised that, regardless of who owned the grass, everyone should be doing the best job possible to look after the environment.

Councillor Clarke reminded Council that it had already considered and undertaken some rewilding many years ago and the current motion was not suggesting anything new.

Councillor G Wheeler thanked Councillor Gowland for her motion and Councillor Cottee for referring to the paper that the County Council had yet to consider. Councillor Wheeler reported that as the Chairman of the Communities and Place Committee, he was totally committed to bringing this issue forward. He advised that he would be meeting with officers next month to discuss rewilding in a measured and focused way on sites that would clearly benefit from that approach. Those sites would be carefully managed in conjunction with partners such as the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

Councillor Robinson reminded Councillors that the Council already did much to support the biodiversity of the Borough, regularly winning awards for its local parks and open spaces, and continued to run the free trees scheme to boost the natural environment. He considered that the Council was already doing what it could to improve the Borough's environment.

Councillor Way highlighted that East Leake had been trying to develop a strategy for planting wild flowers but had come across difficulties in respect of who had responsibility for the land.

Councillor Gaunt thanked Councillor Wheeler for his update and stated that he was pleased that the motion now focused on a larger proportion of land in the Borough.

Councillor Murray reported that, in other areas, significant financial savings had been made, as well as increasing biodiversity and promoting health and wellbeing.

Councillor J Stockwood reminded Councillors that they had just approved the Council's Asset Management Plan, which had highlighted amenity land in the Borough. He referred to the Council's Nature Conservation Policy, which was due for review shortly, before suggesting that not all grassed open spaces were suitable for rewilding, as they often had other uses within

the community.

Councillor Gowland welcomed the support she had received for the rewilding motion and passed on her thanks to Councillor Wheeler for championing the cause with the County Council. Councillor Gowland noted the problems caused by multiple ownership of land and agreed that not all areas were appropriate to be rewilded. She welcomed the opportunity for scrutiny to consider this important topic.

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

- c. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Thomas and seconded by Councillor Way.

“This Council resolves to develop a fair, transparent, and consultative process to allocate the portions of the Community Infrastructure Levy on its Infrastructure List collected for "provision of or improvements to playing pitches and ancillary facilities" and for "provision of or improvements to indoor leisure provision.” Furthermore, the Council resolves to allocate these funds for spending in a timely fashion so that the infrastructure to support development is provided sooner rather than later.”

In presenting the motion, Councillor Thomas explained that in villages within the Borough such as East Leake, infrastructure had not been provided in a timely fashion, which had created a strain on existing facilities. Therefore, it was proposed that when the Council collected the Community Infrastructure Levy for new developments, it should be allocated fairly and promptly to ensure that existing community facilities did not become overwhelmed. Additionally, she considered that parish council’s should have access to funding for development in their area and that the money should be spent where it is required.

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

Councillor Moore stated that the Conservative Party would support the motion.

Councillor Gaunt stated that the Labour Party Group would support the motion and agreed that the village of East Leake had seen extreme levels of new development without having the community infrastructure to accommodate its new residents. He noted therefore, that the Community Infrastructure Levy was the only solution to ease the weight of new developments. Councillor Gaunt expressed concern that 588 new homes were to be built in the village of Ruddington, which would see community facilities such as public transport and schools overwhelmed, and he advised that it would be essential that the Community Infrastructure Levy should be implemented quickly and transparently in order to mitigate any damage that new developments might bring.

Councillor Jones supported the motion on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group and stated that profits from the purchase of new development land should be allocated to the Council, so that new community facilities could be

built for residents. He noted that the Council would always be faced with the dilemma of building developments first before providing community facilities and so it was vital that the Levy should be spent in a timely fashion.

Councillor R Mallender supported the motion on behalf of the Green Party.

Councillor Edyvean advised that although 1,200 houses had been built in East Leake, the Council's Planning Committee had not supported all of those applications, and an independent Planning Inspector had permitted them. He reiterated the importance of the implementation of the Local Plan Part 2, which would enable the Council to be protected from that type of development in the future.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Way stated that she was pleased to note the Council's support of the motion and she confirmed that residents had been informed of the Planning Inspector's decisions when they challenged local councillors about the number of housing developments in East Leake. Councillor Way stated that it was important that communities should be involved in consultation and be made aware of how the Levy was allocated.

Councillor Thomas expressed her appreciation of the Council supporting her motion.

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

21 Questions from Councillors

a) Question from Councillor J Walker to Councillor Mason

"The sadness and uncertainty we have collectively had to face since the beginning of the pandemic has also been coupled with a wonderful community spirit shown by many in our borough. Towns, villages and hamlets across Rushcliffe have come together to support their most vulnerable neighbours and shown what community and society can do at a grassroots level. In my ward, Ruddington, the COVID-19 Mutual Aid Group set up before the announcement of lockdown saw key institutions come together and mobilise hundreds of volunteers in a matter of days.

What can we do at Rushcliffe Borough Council to continue to nurture and inspire our residents to volunteer in their communities, keeping this energy and good spirit functioning into the future?"

Councillor Mason responded that the Council had always supported and worked with communities and that this was never more so than in the last few months. She reminded Councillors that, whilst the lockdown restrictions had been lifted, things had not changed, and that the country might well see another Covid-19 spike in the winter, so it was imperative that the Council did all that it could to keep the community support volunteers enthused. She referred to the Rushcliffe Reach project, which had been awarding grants to individuals and groups working hard in

their communities to support vulnerable people and she asked Councillors to encourage groups to come forward for grants.

Councillor Mason urged Councillors to help communities to build upon what they had achieved in the last few months and to make plans for the winter months to ensure that vulnerable people had the support they needed if asked to shield again.

Supplementary question

Councillor J Walker asked if there was a way that the Council could organise practical support across the Borough.

Councillor Mason replied that she felt it was important to keep the support at a local level so that it could be appropriate and responsive to each individual community.

b) Question from Councillor Gowland to Councillor Inglis

“What homeless prevention measures have RBC used during lockdown?”

Councillor Inglis responded that addressing homelessness was an ongoing commitment and not one specific to the Covid-19 pandemic. Councils across Nottinghamshire had pledged that no one should need to be homeless within the county. In addition to the Government’s positive action on preventing landlord evictions, the Council had continued to work with residents at risk of becoming homeless, through the provision of advice and support along with the Council’s partners, including Citizens’ Advice. As part of the Local Resilience Forum, the Council had also been instrumental in encouraging the provision of the two additional temporary domestic abuse refuges, which were providing a vital safe-haven for those fleeing difficult situations in the home. Furthermore, the Council had also responded to the Government’s ‘Everyone In’ initiative and had offered accommodation for rough sleepers who had been found in the Borough.

Supplementary question

Councillor Gowland asked whether the ‘Everybody In’ initiative had been withdrawn.

Councillor Inglis replied that the Council was committed to the initiative until September 2020, and would assess the situation with regard to Covid-19 at that point.

c) Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Upton

“Is it the case that the Government’s Permitted Development Rights Regulations enable offices to be converted into flats, with 2 storeys added to the height and with no regard to minimum living spaces, without Planning Permission?”

Councillor Upton responded that Permitted Development Rights for conversion of offices to residential properties had been introduced several years ago. New Permitted Development Rights had just been approved by the Government and had come into effect on 1 August 2020. They would enable developers to add two-storeys to existing 'purpose built' blocks of flats where the resultant height of the block did not exceed 30m. The regulations did not impose minimum living spaces.

Supplementary question

Councillor Jones thanked Councillor Upton for confirming the details and asked if Cabinet were happy that this message had been passed to developers in the Borough and whether Cabinet would consider lobbying Central Government to bring in minimum habitable space requirements.

Councillor Upton replied that he did not believe that the Borough had many properties of this type; however, he reiterated that as that change was law, developers should already be aware of it. He advised that he did not feel it necessary to lobby the Government on this matter.

d) Question from Councillor Thomas to Councillor Moore

"How and when will the Council be developing its CIL "Infrastructure Funding Statement" and how will members be involved in this process and the public consulted?"

Councillor Moore responded that the Council was required to publish an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) annually, and by no later than 31 December of each year. No CIL had been received in the period 2019-2020, with only a small amount sent out in demand notices issued that year. Officers were already starting to pull together the information required for the IFS.

Supplementary question

Councillor Thomas asked how the Council would ensure that Councillors and residents were involved in the development of the statement.

Councillor Moore responded that there was no requirement to consult the public on the strategic or the neighbourhood portion passed to town and parish councils; although town and parish councils might want to consider their own procedures for engaging with their communities. Officers were, however, in the process of preparing some guidance for town and parish councils, which would cover the process by which they would receive CIL funds, what those funds could be spent on, including the bidding process for any strategic portion of CIL that they might also seek to utilise, and their reporting responsibilities. Where there was no town or parish council, for example in West Bridgford or areas with a

parish meeting that was where the funds would be be spent by the Borough Council, in consultation with the local community. The procedures for community engagement in the West Bridgford area were being developed in consultation with the West Bridgford Special Expenses Group.

The meeting closed at 9.38 pm.

CHAIRMAN