

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET**

TUESDAY, 11 MAY 2021

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road,
West Bridgford and live streamed on the
Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors S J Robinson (Chairman), A Edyvean (Vice-Chairman), A Brennan,
R Inglis, G Moore and R Upton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors R Jones, C Thomas and J Walker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
S Sull	Service Manager - Legal Services
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

There were no apologies

59 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

60 Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 March 2021, were declared a true record and signed by the Chairman.

61 Citizens' Questions

There were no questions.

62 Opposition Group Leaders' Questions

Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Brennan.

“What specific outcomes did the Government’s Green Homes Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 1 achieve in Rushcliffe in its short timescale, how much of the allocated money was not used and what happened to that

money?”

Councillor Brennan responded by confirming that the first rounds – LAD1a and LAD1b were issued last year and it had been a competitive process. The Council had not applied for funding as the schemes were aimed towards housing stock holding local authorities. The Council had secured funding under the second phase, which was allocated through the Midlands Energy Hubs, and the Cabinet would be considering this report later in the meeting.

Councillor Jones asked a supplementary question to Councillor Brennan.

“Given the short timescale of seven months left in the Phase 2 Scheme, before the available money was presumably lost back to the Government, was it really realistic to get contractors to do that work in East Leake, and would the Cabinet consider telling the Government to stop those short term allocations and make long term, green allocations so that Councils could plan sensibly ahead?”

Councillor Brennan responded by stating that it would be a challenge to find suitable contractors to undertake the work and deliver within the set timescale; however, looking at internal resources and working with strategic partners, it was anticipated that the work would be delivered during the set timescale and it was noted that the Council would continue to support the Government with its ongoing objectives to promote green technology and funding.

Question from Councillor Thomas to Councillor Brennan.

“We are pleased that the proposal for the LAD funding is to target the Rushcliffe Estate in East Leake, though somewhat disappointed that we have heard about it only through the Cabinet papers. Do you see any role for the Ward Members and Parish Council in encouraging uptake?”

Councillor Brennan responded by confirming that the support of Ward Councillors and the Parish Council to encourage homeowners to take advantage of the available grants would be welcomed. If the Scheme was approved by Cabinet, further details would be available at the beginning of June 2021, and once the project delivery programme had been finalised, it would be the appropriate time to consider how to disseminate the information to residents, with the support of Ward Councillors and the Parish Council. It was noted that other potential areas across the Borough were also being considered for energy efficiency measures. Councillor Brennan referred to the issue of Ward Councillors being unaware of the Scheme until the Cabinet agenda had been published, and stated that although it was important that information was not announced prematurely, to avoid raising expectations, before a decision had been made, as a courtesy Ward Councillors should be notified before such information became public.

Councillor Thomas asked a supplementary question to Councillor Brennan.

“What was the Publicity Strategy to encourage people to take up the offer?”

Councillor Brennan responded by advising that when the Action Plan and Work Programme were in place, a Publicity Strategy would be produced to raise

awareness of the Scheme and Ward Councillors would continue to be updated.

Question from Councillor J Walker to Councillor Brennan.

“Will the Cabinet commit RBC to an open and transparent procurement process that prioritises the use of local suppliers and trades people so that we can keep money from being extracted out of our communities when tendering for the LAD scheme therefore ensuring Rushcliffe SME’s benefit as well as residents from this scheme?”

Councillor Brennan responded by confirming that the Council’s Procurement process was both open and transparent and accessible to all. The Council supported local business in many ways including work programmes and projects that it looked to commission. The Council was very keen to see local businesses successfully tender for Council contracts, and its Procurement Strategy would always be designed to secure value for money for local residents and provide opportunities to local businesses to either tender directly, or partner with other organisations. It was noted that there was a very significant budget attached to the LAD programme, together with a very tight timescale, and that would mean that any organisations involved in tendering must have the capacity, speed and scale of delivery to complete the project. Hence that was why the Council was working with key partners and where possible using existing contract frameworks some of which would include local companies to maximise delivery whilst following the Council’s standing orders and financial regulations.

63 Rushcliffe Equalities Scheme 2021-2025

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community and the Environment, Councillor Brennan presented the report of the Director of Development and Economic Growth outlining the Rushcliffe Equality Scheme for 2021 to 2025.

Cllr Brennan advised that she was delighted to present the updated Rushcliffe Equality Scheme for 2021-25, which had been refreshed to reflect current circumstances and new actions required. Cabinet noted that the document had kept its focus at a strategic level, with equality and diversity issues embedded in the Council’s mainstream and daily activities. The importance of ensuring that all residents in the Borough could access services equally was emphasised, with any potential barriers being identified and performance monitoring undertaken to reduce those barriers. Cabinet was advised that the Scheme had been considered twice by the Communities Scrutiny Group and undergone a public consultation. Councillor Brennan advised that the Scheme had a broader focus than before and included progress on inclusion, to enable everyone to access services in the most appropriate way. Details of the aims and commitments of the Scheme were highlighted in the report and it was noted that the Scheme set out high level objectives and the actions referred to in the Appendix to the report would form the basis of Action Plans, which would be annually reviewed. In conclusion, Councillor Brennan advised that the Action Plans would be embedded across all of the Council’s Annual Service Plans and details of the Action Plan for 2021/22, highlighted in the Appendix to the report were noted.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Inglis reiterated the importance of this essential document, which had been developed following public consultation and scrutiny by the Communities Scrutiny Group, to ensure inclusion and accessibility for everyone and that no one in the Borough would be disadvantaged when accessing Council services and that all employees were respected and treated fairly. Cabinet noted that this was a live document, which would continue to be developed and enhanced.

Councillor Upton concurred with the previous comments and reiterated the importance of this live document, which would be reviewed regularly through the annual review of the Action Plans.

Councillor Robinson referred to the importance of this document in identifying the challenges for both the public and Council employees, and recognised the need for it to be a working, live document, that would be updated to reflect the environment that the Council worked in and the challenges that would bring.

It was RESOLVED that the Equality Scheme 2021-2025 and supporting Action Plan for 2021/22 be approved.

64 **Covid 19: Update Report**

The Leader presented the report of the Chief Executive, providing an update on the work completed to date on response and recovery due to the Covid 19 pandemic since February 2021, and detailing an outline of plans to support the recovery from Covid 19.

The Leader highlighted the key headlines in the report, which reflected the work undertaken both internally and externally by the Council during the pandemic. Cabinet noted the changes to lockdown levels since January 2021, and the overview of restrictions, including the recent confirmation by the Government of the lifting of some restrictions scheduled for 17 May 2021, with a further easing of restrictions currently planned for 21 June 2021, details of which were highlighted in the report.

In respect of community issues, Cabinet noted the excellent work undertaken to ensure that the Council's parks and open spaces have been appropriately managed, as usage increased, details of which were highlighted in the report. The Leader also referred to the success of the vaccine programme, which was underpinning the easing of restrictions and referred to the key role that the Council had played to support that programme, with the use of the Gamston Community Centre as a vaccination centre, which had so far administered over 50,000 vaccine doses. Cabinet was advised that the feedback from all users had been excellent and the Leader thanked all the staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment. Reference was also made to the successful running of the test and trace facility at the Arena, which continued to play a key role.

The Leader reiterated the importance of the financial support given to businesses throughout the pandemic, including business rate grants, an extension to the Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS) funding, and funding from the Department for Work and Pensions to support vulnerable families,

details of which were highlighted in the report. The speed, efficiency and effectiveness of the funding roll out was emphasised, and officers were thanked for their hard work to facilitate that.

In respect of leisure, the significant impact to this sector could not be underestimated and the Leader confirmed that the Council had been successful in securing funding of £224,000 from the National Leisure Recovery Fund. Cabinet noted the successful reopening of the leisure centres, and it was envisaged that with the further lifting of restrictions on 17 May 2021, more services would become available. Cabinet noted that the hospitality sector, which played a key role in the Borough's economy, had been able to start operating again, by expanding outdoor facilities, with the advice and support of Enforcement officers playing a key role in ensuring safety measures were adhered to.

The Leader referred to the funding given to community groups throughout the Borough, details of which were highlighted in the report, and the significant positive impact that had made to so many.

In conclusion, the Leader referred to positive news that the 'Proms in the Park' event was scheduled for 26 June 2021, with any social distancing guidelines being adhered to, and such an event provided an important message to residents and businesses that Rushcliffe was again open for business, with further events being planned.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Edyvean noted the positive outlook and confirmed that the Council was already well placed to deal with any situation, if circumstances changed. Cabinet noted the significant work undertaken already to ensure that support had been provided to those in need, and all those involved were thanked for their hard work. Councillor Edyvean referred to the RHSS funding, which it was hoped would help local hospitality businesses to continue to reopen safely and welcomed the opportunity to hold events such as 'Proms in the Park' again.

Councillor Moore provided an update on the Restart Grants and advised that as of today, the Council had given £3m to 392 businesses, and Cabinet noted that in a recent league table, Rushcliffe had been second in the country in providing payments, with over 99% of Government funding received being paid out.

Councillor Brennan reiterated the comments made and hoped that the positive work and joint collaboration with all sectors of the community would continue going forward.

In conclusion, the Leader advised that there was still a great deal to be done moving forward and the next key phase would be the recovery, and it was vital that the Council supported communities and businesses during the challenging times ahead by continuing to adapt to such unprecedented times.

It was RESOLVED that the work of officers of the Council and partners in responding to and supporting the recovery from Covid 19 be noted.

65 **East Midlands Freeport Update and Next Steps**

The Leader presented the report of the Chief Executive, providing an update on the East Midlands Freeport and the next steps to be taken.

The Leader highlighted the key headlines in the report, and reminded Cabinet that at the beginning of March 2021, the Government had announced the successful bid for the East Midlands Freeport. Cabinet noted that there was still considerable work to be done, as the announcement did not mean that a Freeport had been granted, rather the expression of interest made had been supported. Cabinet was also advised that as the site would encompass three sites, which was unusual, the branding was extremely important, and an announcement would be made shortly regarding a change of name for the proposed Freeport. The Leader reiterated that the Council's main interests related to the Ratcliffe on Soar power station, which was planned to be decommissioned in 2025, and Cabinet noted the challenges that lay ahead due to the different aspects of the site itself, details of which were highlighted in the report.

The Council's ongoing support for the Freeport, including the other two proposed sites outside of Rushcliffe was reiterated. The Leader highlighted the timescales issued by the Government and the governance arrangements, details of which were highlighted in the report, and it was hoped that the Freeport would be in operation by the end of 2021. The considerable work being undertaken to meet that deadline was emphasised, with Leicestershire County Council being the Lead Authority, and six local authorities, including Rushcliffe on the Freeport Governing Board, with the majority of positions on that Board being taken by the private sector. Details of the management and delivery of the key workstream to be administered by the Board were highlighted in the report and noted. The Leader advised that of key importance was the development of an Outline Business Case (OBC) and it was envisaged that the Government timescales would be met. The Cabinet noted that engagement with key partners would be crucial to the success of the Freeport, and it was hoped that this would be through a shadow "Engagement Network". The Leader referred again to the challenges faced at the power station site, with part of the site designated as Green Belt and as a Centre of Excellence in the Council's Local Plan. Cabinet noted that officers were working very closely with the owners of the site to look at the planning challenges, and the potential plans and options going forward were highlighted in the report.

In conclusion the Leader reiterated the importance of the Freeports as a major platform for the Government, in playing a major role in the economy, with the potential for substantial additional employment, particularly new, high skilled jobs and new business opportunities, and Rushcliffe, as part of the Board would continue to make representations to ensure that occurred.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Edyvean referred to the very challenging timescales set by the Government, and the work already taking place to adhere to those deadlines, and noted the importance of working with the owners of the power station, to find the best way forward to create appropriate development, in particular in relation to green infrastructure, for the benefit of Rushcliffe as a whole. Councillor Edyvean referred to the importance

of avoiding the site becoming redundant and stated that considerable work had already been taking place to avoid that scenario.

Councillor Upton referred to the importance of the power station site as a major gateway into Rushcliffe and reiterated the importance of the site not becoming redundant and derelict. Cabinet was reminded that this would be the only internal Freeport in the country, the central location was ideal and the infrastructure already in place was very good, and this would be an excellent opportunity to improve the area.

The Leader referred to the ambitious timescales set by the Government and the challenges faced in meeting those deadlines, together with the need to ensure that the governance arrangements were correct, and it was pleasing to see everyone working together and showing great ambition to move this forward, with the potential for significant job creation. The Leader reminded Cabinet that the Freeport proposal was running in parallel with the Development Corporation, which was of key importance, and the strong competition from other areas bidding to be a Freeport was considerable. In conclusion, the Leader stated that the timing of the proposal was perfect, to create opportunities for the East Midlands, and the excellent location of the power station site was reiterated, as was the importance of not allowing it to become redundant and derelict.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) retrospective approval to the nomination of a Cabinet Member to the Freeport Board be given;
- b) the progress made so far on the Freeport bid and the proposed next steps be noted; and
- c) the approach to working with the site owner and the Freeport and Development Corporation to explore developing a Local Development Order or other suitable Order, to deliver greater planning certainty for the site be endorsed.

66 Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Phase 2 Funding

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Community and the Environment, Councillor Brennan presented the report of the Director of Neighbourhoods outlining the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Phase 2 funding programme.

Councillor Brennan confirmed that the funding was designed to improve the energy efficiency of low income households and low energy performance certificate rated homes of all tenure types. Cabinet was advised that an allocation had been ring fenced for each district, and in April 2021, Rushcliffe had been informed that its allocation would be just under £700,000. Cabinet noted that it was anticipated that the grant would deliver on a number of objectives, details of which were highlighted in the report. Councillor Brennan advised that the timetable for the delivery of the funding was extremely tight, and the report recommended that a geographical approach be adopted initially to ensure that as many properties as possible would benefit, and an area in

East Leake had been identified. Cabinet noted that a project delivery proposal was in the process of being finalised and had to be submitted by 24 May 2021, and it was confirmed that initially work would be undertaken on 25 properties, with that expectation of works to 64 properties going forward. Councillor Brennan reiterated that the turnaround time to spend the funding would be extremely tight, with the first 50% required to be spent by September 2021, with all of the activity completed by the end of the year. Cabinet was advised that the timetable would be challenged further by the requirement to identify specialist contractors to undertake the work; however, officers were confident that with the support of the Midlands Energy Hub and the internal resources available, the programme will be delivered on time.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Moore referred to the great distress caused by fuel poverty, the exacerbation of the problem due to Covid and lockdown, and stated that any scheme to improve energy efficiency would be welcomed by residents in Rushcliffe, and officers were thanked for their hard work in implementing the programme. Councillor Moore stated that as Chairman of the East Leake Growth Board, he was sure that the residents of East Leake would welcome the programme and that it would be well supported by the Ward Councillors and the Parish Council.

The Leader confirmed that the Government had set an extremely ambitious target in respect of environmental issues, and as part of that, energy efficient housing would be a key element of that, and it was hoped that the Government would expand the scheme and it would be pleasing to see the positive outcome from the programme.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted, and the following be approved:

- a) the funding allocation has been accepted;
- b) the project is time pressured and must be delivered by the 31 December 2021;
- c) the potential target area for the project is initially focussed on East Leake; however, it may be extended across other areas in the Borough if uptake in East Leake is limited; and
- d) the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme be amended (as stated at paragraph 7.1.5) noting that the net impact on the budget is zero due to funding via external grant.

At the close of the meeting, the Leader announced that this would be Councillor Upton's last meeting as a member of the Cabinet and thanked him for his contribution over the years and wished him well.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

CHAIRMAN