

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY GROUP
WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2022**

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

PRESENT:

Councillors N Clarke (Chairman), M Barney, R Butler, A Phillips, V Price,
J Stockwood, K Beardsall and L Way

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Richard Cooper - Sustainable Places Team Leader, Environment Agency
Chris Bramley – Strategic Catchment Planning, Severn Trent

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C Evans

Service Manager - Economic Growth
and Property

T Coop

Democratic Services Officer

C Saxton

Economic Growth Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors J Cottee

5 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

6 Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2022 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

7 Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe

The Chairman reminded the Group that the Scrutiny Matrix submitted specified that Councillors wanted to understand the situation in Rushcliffe regarding the sewage infrastructure and any unlawful discharges.

Richard Cooper, Sustainable Places Team Leader at the Environment Agency delivered a presentation outlining planning and wastewater from the perspective of the Environment Agency.

Mr Cooper advised the Group that in respect of strategic planning the Environment Agency would normally provide comment on documents that form part of a local plan, including Water Cycle Strategy, Strategic Flood risk Assessments, Surface Water Management Plans, Strategic Infrastructure Plans, Environmental or Green Infrastructure Study, Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessments as well as main planning documents (Local Plans). Mr Cooper advised that in most cases such

comments would be in the line of:

- All development should connect to the existing foul drainage network
- Development will need to ensure there's available capacity within;
 - a) The receiving sewerage network; and
 - b) The sewage treatment works
- Developers and the Local Planning Authority should confirm available capacity with the water company prior to allocating sites
- Development and Growth should not impact on the quality of watercourses in the Borough

It was noted that in respect of developmental planning the Environment agency would respond to a major development (10 or more dwellings) or where a proposal is not to connect to mains drainage.

Mr Cooper provided the drainage hierarchy as follows:

1. Infiltration to ground
2. Discharge to surface waterbody
3. Discharge to surface water sewer/highway drain or other
4. To a combined sewer

The group were provided with an explanation of how the sewerage system works, from wastewater (foul) being flushed away from properties, flowing to a local wastewater treatment works (WWTW), to then arriving for treatment before being discharged back into the watercourse. It was noted that in older systems both foul and surface water use the same pipe (combined system) and newer systems have separate pipes. However, whilst new housing schemes will have separate systems, it does not mean the system further downstream is separate.

In respect of rainwater some WWTW have storm tanks that provide storage when the incoming flow is greater than the capacity to treat. However, if the storm tanks are full, then to prevent the treatment works being flooded or the foul water backing up, the wastewater is allowed to spill. If pumping stations fail or breakdown then these too are allowed to spill. It was noted that such spills are monitored by the Government.

Mr Cooper explained that the Environment Agency administrates and regulates wastewater spills under the Environmental Permitting Regulations, adding that there is no limit on how often a storm overflow operates providing it is compliant with the permit. It was noted that the WWTW at Cotgrave has closed with the Radcliffe on Trent WWTW now receiving their sewage, adding that discharges are made directly into the River Trent. Mr Cooper advised that the WWTW at Radcliffe on Trent does have limits on when it should overflow but not on frequency and these occurrences are monitored.

Mr Cooper added that when a Combined Sewer Overflow spills above the Storm Overflow assessment Framework threshold this will be investigated by Severn Trent Water including the Combined Sewer Overflow at Radcliffe on Trent. It was noted that Severn Trent Water has a good performance on discharge permit compliance. In addition, the new Environment Act 2021 has

introduced a Storm Overflow Reduction Plan that will drive further improvement to reduce the number of spill events and the focus for the Environment Agency is to make sure everything that should be treated is treated and that sewage flows are not by-passing a storm overflow.

Chris Bramley, Strategic Catchment Planning for Severn Trent provided the Group with an overview of how Severn Trent identifies and understands the risks associated with development and what is being done to accommodate growth within Rushcliffe.

Mr Bramley informed the Group that developers have the right to connect to the sewerage system and as a water authority, Severn Trent is not able to refuse connection due to lack of capacity. Mr Bramley explained that Severn Trent engages with the Local Planning Authority at various stages of the Local Plan development process and that planning applications are reviewed by their Networks solutions department and where assessments indicate a risk these would be reviewed by the Asset Protection Department before advising on what conditions may be required or where schemes to provide capacity for growth are needed. It was noted that new schemes are assessed on a priority basis across the Severn Trent Region and are funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy charges (CIL).

Mr Bramley advised that Severn Trent operates a 5 Gate process in respect of promoting and delivering schemes:

- Gate 1 - High level assessment of risk to ensure that investment is allocated to the most appropriate locations
 - Gate 2 - Project feasibility, where a more detailed understanding of the risks and the concept solutions are developed – this stage involves surveys, flow analysis, costs and benefits of the scheme
 - Gate 3 - detailed design phase, where final solution is developed
 - Gate 4 - Delivery stage during which the scheme is completed
 - Gate 5 - Scheme review where the project delivered meets its set objectives
- Mr Bramley provided an illustration of Rushcliffe's Local Plan sites and some additional sites and the stage in the above process each is at.

Mr Bramley continued his presentation advising the Group of Severn Trent's draft Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan, which sets out how the water authority will extend and maintain a robust and resilient drainage and wastewater system. Mr Bramley explained the Plan provides greater transparency of current and future risks and consistency across the water industry with emphasis on wastewater and working collaboratively with stakeholders to mitigate future pressures associated with climate change, population growth and urbanisation.

Mr Bramley provided a timeline of objectives over the next few years including:

- Protection of river quality - by reducing storm overflow spills and upgrading storm overflows, in order that none of the drainage operations cause Reasons for Not Achieving Good Status (RNAGs) for rivers.
- Make areas more flood resilient – by upgrading surface water drainage,

including improved engineering methods to separate surface water and nature-based solutions.

- Improve Capacity of our Wastewater treatment – by upgrading wastewater treatment works and processes to improve capacity

The Group noted that the consultation period for the Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan runs until 30 September 2022, with the final plan due to be published in December 2022.

Councillors commented on the Local Plan and Rushcliffe having a 30% increase in population due to housing development and reported issues in respect of flooding and sewerage spills at East Leake and Sutton Bonington. Councillors asked whether more robust planning conditions would help alleviate and prevent spills in future.

Councillors also commented on the closure of the WWTW at Cotgrave and whether the WWTW at Radcliffe is able to cope with the extra capacity.

Mr Bramley explained that there has been some investigation work at Sutton Bonington and at East Leake where issues were not picked up due to windfall developments, Mr Bramley advised that a new scheme was coming forward at Kingston Brooke which will alleviate some of the issues at East Leake.

Mr Cooper informed the Group that new developments are treated appropriately in respect of planning and planning conditions and reminded Councillors that Severn Trent cannot refuse connection to the water system for any new developments, and explained that attenuation areas and tanks are robust enough for most new developments. Mr Cooper added that both Severn Trent and the Environment Agency have set rules to follow and suggested that local authorities can influence what is agreed at the Strategic Local Plan stage.

Councillors raised concerns in respect of surface water flooding and the water authority and Environment Agency relationships with the local flood authority. Councillors also commented on where combined sewers were located and whether residents have access to such information. Mr Bramley advised that regular liaison meetings do take place and planning is often discussed, in respect of improvements and budget streams the Draft Wastewater Management Plan once adopted, would assist with long term schemes coming forward and allow for extra growth in the system. With regard to information on combined sewers, Mr cooper advised that it is difficult to provide data that can be easily accessed as there are a number of organisations involved. Councillors noted this highlighted a problem in respect of public access to information and being able to report areas of concern and flood occurrences.

Councillors asked Mr Cooper from an environment view, how effective were the permits and conditions issued to Severn Trent and how are environmental breaches monitored and reported. Mr Cooper explained that monitoring is taking place within a wider framework directive and that there is an element of self-regulation for water authorities within the parameters of their permits. It was noted that Severn Trent report breaches to the Environment Agency.

With regards to funding streams for additional improvements to the system the Chairman asked whether Severn Trent can request funding contributions from the developer. Mr Bramley explained that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is charged to the developer, it is then up to the local authority how the CIL money is spent.

The Chairman suggested that this item be brought back to a future meeting of Growth and development scrutiny and that in the meantime the Council would improve its relationships with agencies to mitigate the impact of flooding events.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group:

- a) Considered the key lines of enquiry contained in the scrutiny matrix and asked questions of the expert speakers
- b) Requested that further scrutiny, related to sewerage infrastructure and discharge be brought back to a future meeting of this committee.

8 **Covid-19 Business Recovery Update**

The Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property and the Economic Growth Officer delivered a presentation in respect of Covid-19 Business Recovery, which provided the Group with an update on the work being done to support businesses to recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic.

The Group were provided with statistical data in respect of unemployment claims, job vacancies and business closures and were advised that the D2N2 LEP had provided an analysis of Rushcliffe's labour market demands, which showed there were 800 unique jobs advertised between January and July 2022.

The Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property explained that during the pandemic, the Economic Growth Team had monitored the vacancy rates in our main towns and villages and reported that the majority of the town centres had very few or no empty units, with only a couple in West Bridgford, Bingham and Radcliffe on Trent. It was noted that in August the occupancy level at Council owned industrial units was at 100% and the new yet to be opened Bingham Enterprise Centre already had four interested parties.

The Economic Growth Officer informed the Group of some of the activities that had been delivered using the Welcome Back Funding from the European Regional Development Fund to support the safe reopening of our town centres.

Some of this funding went to the following activities:

- The appointment of a temporary town centre consultant from September 2021 to June 2022.
- Enhanced and additional events in West Bridgford and some of the larger towns and villages
- Improvements to the visual appearance of town centres
- Promotion of job vacancies on the Council's Social Media platforms

- Ongoing communications campaigns e.g. Shop Local Shop Safe
- Exploring opportunities for Digital promotion of high streets e.g. West Bridgford Way
- Rushcliffe Business Partnership networking events in West Bridgford and Ruddington
- Continue to build on relationships with high street businesses – retail forums and WhatsApp groups
- Rushcliffe Big Business Carbon Club established to encourage larger businesses to act as champions to deliver a greener economic recovery

It was noted that the Economic Growth Team work closely with external agencies to sign post businesses and tailor support as required, primarily the D2N2 Growth Hub offering a range of business support and advice.

The Economic Growth Officer informed the Group of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and Rushcliffe's allocation of £2,571,46 to be spent over 3 years (2022/23 to 2024/25) as follows:

2022/23 - £312,071
 2023/24 - £624,141
 2024/25 - £1,635,250

The Economic Growth Officer advised the Group that an investment plan had been submitted on 1 August and the funding can be used from April 2022 to support activities as prescribed within the investment support priorities of the UKSPF which are, Community and Place, Business Support and People and Skills (People and Skills from 2024/25).

It was noted that lead local authorities across Nottinghamshire are encouraged to work with local partners to deliver on the UK Governments wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK by delivering the levelling up objectives. The primary goal of the UKSPF being to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK.

The Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property advised that the Council's desires are focussed on local projects that support the delivery of the Council's corporate plan priorities:

- Quality of Life
- Efficient Services
- Sustainable Growth
- The Environment to Rushcliffe

The Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property informed the Group of the recently announced Rural England Prosperity Funding and the allocation for Rushcliffe of £596,193 from April 2023 to March 2025. It was explained that this fund provides capital funding to support new and existing rural businesses and to support new and improved community infrastructure. It was noted that this fund was for projects in rural areas and that local rural partners would be consulted to deliver the fund.

The Group were advised that the Economic Growth Team have five key areas

of focus over the coming months to ensure ongoing support is provided for local businesses.

These are:

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)
- Rushcliffe Business Partnership
- Business Support – Chapel Lane
- High Street Support
- Growth Boards

The Group commended officers on their continued support to local businesses. However, it was felt that the UK was no longer in a pandemic and that moving forward the Council should be responding to the economic climate and growth, including rural communities, start-up businesses, industrial land allocations and promoting these areas to encourage businesses to provide local jobs for a local economy.

The Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property explained that much of what had been suggested would be picked up by the UKSPF work. In addition, it was noted that the six strategic sites, including industrial allocations will be promoted when appropriate.

Councillors asked specific questions relating to the Community and Place investment priority and whether this would include some community involvement. The Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property explained that the Leader of the Council was promoting the funding opportunities through the Town and Parish Council Forum. The Chairman explained that the Rural Fund had only recently been announced and that it was important to priorities what is relevant to Rushcliffe and what provides the best value for money.

Councillors suggested that transparency is required in respect to funding allocations and decisions, and that information needs to be communicated to Councillors and the Business Community so they are kept informed of the projects and objectives for delivering the funding. The Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property advised that stakeholders would be involved.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The Growth and Development Scrutiny Group endorse the proposed future activity and identified and supports the rural economy
- b) The Group recognises and compliments the efforts of officers supporting local businesses

9 **Work Programme**

The Chairman highlighted the absence of new scrutiny items and suggested that Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe be brought back to a future meeting in the new year. He also asked the Group to consider new scrutiny items that could be put forward to the Corporate Overview Group using the Council's Scrutiny Matrix.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Group consider its Work Programme and that the following items for scrutiny were agreed.

4 January 2023

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)
- Work Programme

8 March 2023

- Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe (to be approved)
- Work Programme

ACTIONS – 21 September 2022

Minute No	Action	Officer Responsible
7	Councillors requested a visit to the Environment Agencies fish breeding farm at Calverton	Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property
7	A letter on behalf of the Chairman be sent to the Environment Agency and Severn Trent to establish whether both organisations have information available for residents to report incidents and to establish an action plan for preventative measures in respect of new developments to assist Officers and Councillors when applying condition to planning applications	Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property

The meeting closed at 9.22 pm.

CHAIRMAN