

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET**

TUESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2023

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

PRESENT:

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

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
G Dennis	Monitoring Officer
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

42 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

43 Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 December 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 13 December 2022, were declared a true record and signed by the Chairman.

44 Citizens' Questions

There were no citizens' questions.

45 Opposition Group Leaders' Questions

There were no Opposition Group Leaders' questions.

46 2023/24 Budget and Financial Strategy

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Customer Access, Councillor Moore, presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services outlining the Council's proposed budget for 2023/24, the five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) from 2023/24 to 2027/28, which included the revenue budget, the proposed Capital Programme, the Transformation Strategy and the Capital and Investment Strategy.

Councillor Moore confirmed that the Council was predominantly self-sufficient, and no longer received any Government Support Grant, which in itself highlighted the continued success of the Transformation Strategy. Cabinet

was reminded that the New Homes Bonus had been due to cease after this year; however, it had now been confirmed that the Council will receive £1.4m for this year and the same for next year. Councillor Moore advised that the budget reflected increases in inflation, together with increases in staffing, fuel, and utilities costs, with those pressures demonstrating the cost challenges to the Council.

In respect of the Council's revenue streams, Councillor Moore was pleased to advise that the Council's commercial investment income was generating almost £2m, accounting for 20% of fees and charges income, which justified the Council's Investment Strategy. Both car parking and green waste charges were again being frozen, to support the retail sector and residents.

Cabinet noted that the Council Tax base had increased by 1.5% from last year to 43,387 properties, with planned increases to just below 50,000 by the end of the MTF period, highlighting the projected growth in the Borough. Councillor Moore referred to the final budget requirements, detailed in Table 10 of the Annex to the report and reiterated the importance of the Council retaining adequate reserves. Table 11 detailed specific reserves and Councillor Moore referred to the inclusion of a new Capital Depreciation reserve and was pleased to note that the Climate Change Action reserve remained healthy and was included for the full MTF period.

In respect of the Capital Programme, Councillor Moore confirmed that the Council remained debt free, after significant capital expenditure on the new Bingham Arena and the Crematorium, with further planned projects for Cotgrave and Keyworth Leisure Centres and Hound Lodge, which supported families made unintentionally homeless. Cabinet was reminded that this positive support for local communities was only possible due to the Council's good financial management.

In respect of Council Tax, Councillor Moore confirmed that the Government had provided a further £123,000 support, and to maximise the use of that funding, it was recommended that all taxpayers in Bands A to D be given a credit to their Council Tax, the net effect being a nil increase in Rushcliffe's element of the bill. That would account for approximately 60% of housing in the Borough and acknowledged some of the current cost of living challenges being faced by residents. Councillor Moore stated that the remaining bands above D would, see a 2% increase, as supported at the Budget Workshops, with this increase being well below inflation.

Councillor Moore concluded by advising that this was a prudent budget, which supported the Council moving forward, whilst acknowledging the financial pressures being faced by many. Cabinet was reminded that the Council had the lowest Council Tax in Nottinghamshire and was within the lowest quartile in the UK. Councillor Moore thanked the Director – Finance and Corporate Services and the Service Manager – Finance for their hard work and Councillors for attending the Budget Workshops, which formed an important part of the budget setting process.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Edyvean congratulated the Director – Finance and Corporate Services and his team for continuing to keep

the Council's finances in good order during very challenging financial times. Reference was made to the significant major projects successfully delivered this year, and how this budget highlighted the Council's continued ambition, despite those challenges. Councillor Edyvean agreed that this was an excellent budget, providing much needed help to residents and it was noted that nationally many Councils would be raising Council Tax by the maximum amount, which highlighted how important it was to have well managed finances to avoid that.

Councillor Upton referred to the many positive comments he had recently received from both local residents and visitors to Rushcliffe regarding the Council's decision to continue to freeze both car parking and green waste charges and that the Council Tax would remain the same for Band A to D taxpayers. Councillor Upton stated that such comments vindicated what the Council was doing, and that people appreciated it.

The Leader agreed with those comments and stated that the budget was forward looking and contained something for everyone, supporting all residents, including the most vulnerable, and reiterated the importance of supporting businesses, as they generated wealth and employment opportunities, which were so important for the future. The Leader stated that this budget was a great testament to the Director – Finance and Corporate Services and his team and to Councillors too and reiterated the usefulness of the Budget Workshops in ensuring that everyone had the opportunity to put their ideas forward. This budget was reflective of Rushcliffe as a whole and Cabinet was reminded of the current challenging economic environment, and that it was pleasing to note that the Council was very close to being self-dependant. The Leader concluded by referring to the successful delivery of the Bingham Arena and the Crematorium, which would deliver key services supported by this budget.

It was RESOLVED that Cabinet RECOMMENDS to Council that it:

- a) adopts the budget setting report and associated financial strategies 2023/24 to 2027/28, as set out in the Annex to the report;
- b) adopts the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 3 of the Annex;
- c) adopts the Capital and Investment Strategy at Appendix 4 of the Annex;
- d) adopts the Council Tax Support Scheme at Appendix 6 of the Annex;
- e) approves that the period for applying the Empty Homes Premium is reduced from 24 months to 12 months (as stated at Section 3.4 of the Annex) to help incentivise housing use within the Borough;
- f) sets Rushcliffe's 2023/24 Council Tax for a Band D property at £153.95 (increase from 2022/23 of £3.02 or 2%);
- g) approves the Council Tax Support Fund (CTSF) to support economically vulnerable households with up to a £25 reduction in their

Council Tax bills;

- h) linked to the CTSF, approves further funding from RBC of around £30k to ensure anyone in Bands A to D Council Tax are given a discount, effectively resulting in no person up to a Band D paying an increase in the Rushcliffe element of Council Tax;
- i) sets the Special Expenses for West Bridgford, Ruddington and Keyworth, Appendix 1 of the Annex, resulting in the following Band D Council Tax levels for the Special Expense Areas:
 - i) West Bridgford £55.95 (£53.91 in 2022/23);
 - ii) Keyworth £4.38 (£3.30 in 2022/23);
 - iii) Ruddington £3.68 (£3.82 in 2022/23);
- j) adopts the Pay Policy Statement at Appendix 7 of the Annex; and
- k) delegates authority to the Director – Finance and Corporate Services to make any minor amendments to the Medium Term Financial Strategy once the final local government finance settlement is received and advise the Finance Portfolio Holder accordingly, to be reported to Full Council.

47 **Infrastructure Funding Statement**

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor Upton, presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth detailing the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS).

Councillor Upton confirmed that it was a legal requirement to publish an annual IFS, which detailed the funds collected by the Council from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Agreements (s106). The statement detailed funds collected up until 31 March 2022, when approximately £36m was held for s106 funding and £1.6m for CIL. Councillor Upton stated that although this was a considerable sum for s106, it should be noted those funds were primarily used for very large infrastructure projects, and as the funding was collected in phases, until it was all received, it could accumulate for a number of years before being spent. In respect of CIL money, Cabinet noted that this was first collected in late 2019, and much of that funding had already been spent.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Brennan stated that on occasion questions were raised and implied criticism given that the Council was not spending funds as quickly as it could, and it was pleasing that this statement clearly set out the true position and why some funding accumulated before being spent.

Councillor Robinson was pleased that those significant funds would ultimately be invested across the Borough, whilst acknowledging that it could be frustrating having to accumulate large sums in advance before work was

undertaken. Councillor Robinson referred to the many schemes that had been funded by s106 money over the past 10 years and agreed that this statement answered many of the questions raised about the process. It was also noted that the majority of s106 funding was spent on infrastructure projects not within the Council's control.

It was RESOLVED that the content of the 2021/22 Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement be acknowledged.

48 **Corporate Enforcement Policy Review**

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Safety, Councillor Inglis, presented the report of the Monitoring Officer outlining the review of the Council's Corporate Enforcement Policy.

Councillor Inglis confirmed that the Policy had last been reviewed in October 2019, and had been pleased to see that it had been included in the Work Programme for the Communities Scrutiny Group for review, to ensure that it accurately reflected the approach taken to enforcement corporately, linked with the Council's enforcement protocols and policies, and to abide with any new legislation, especially following on from the Council's recent, positive staff restructuring to address enforcement more expediently and robustly. Cabinet noted that the Policy was an umbrella policy, which applied to legislation enforced or administered by Council officers in five areas, details of which were highlighted in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

Councillor Inglis explained that the revised document incorporated an amendment, requested by the Communities Scrutiny Group in regard to proportionality and that the first stages would be prevention but would then follow the concept of the widely used four Es protocol: Engage; Explain; Educate; and Enforce. It was noted; however, that any serious incident would be pitched at the appropriate level with consideration to the individual circumstances of that case.

Councillor Inglis concluded by advising that the Policy clearly set out the principles of enforcement and that the primary purpose was to protect the public and the environment, and the Policy also included an Equality Impact Assessment form, which had a clearly written protocol that could be easily understood and conformed to.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Edyvean reiterated the importance of reviewing and keeping policies updated, referred to the scourge of enviro-crime in modern living and to the inroads that the Council had made to improve, discourage, and clean up problem areas. Whilst that formed only a small part of the review, Councillor Edyvean advised that it was important that the Council continued to deliver excellent services across all areas.

Councillor Brennan welcomed the report, referred to the importance of investing in resources and staff to ensure the rules and regulations were enforced, and referred to the positive feedback that she had received when the Council had acted swiftly to deal with littering and fly-tipping in particular.

Councillor Moore concurred with previous comments and stated that having a strong enforcement regime was invaluable and people were noticing that action was being taken.

Councillor Robinson referred to the challenges of keeping up with legislative changes, which was demanding for officers, often caused frustration to residents, and it was acknowledged that there were times when the Council would prefer to do more but was unable to do so.

It was RESOLVED that the proposed amendments to the Corporate Enforcement Policy be endorsed.

The meeting closed at 7.28 pm.

CHAIRMAN