

Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by this scrutiny group during 2022/23 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. I am very pleased to note that despite another challenging year, the business of scrutiny has proceeded as planned and all topics programmed for 2022/23 were considered.

The Group has explored the Council's Growth and Development responsibilities in line with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which include:

- Overseeing significant projects contributing towards growth in the Borough to ensure deliverables are met and growth-related outcomes achieved
- Scrutinising infrastructure development which acts as a catalyst for growth in the Borough to ensure such developments progress in a timely fashion and any obstructive barriers are removed or negotiated
- Reviewing the growth in demand for Council services ensuring all residents can access the services they need in a timely and cost-efficient manner
- Considering projects and initiatives to promote economic vibrancy, local democracy and community leadership within local towns and villages contributing towards the overall Council goal of creating Great Place and Great Lifestyle
- Reviewing the Council's policies and strategies as appropriate prior to adoption.

Councillor Neil Clarke
Chair Growth and Development Scrutiny



Councillor Neil Clarke
Chair



Councillor Richard Butler
Vice-Chair

What are we responsible for?

The Growth and Development Scrutiny Group's remit is to consider relevant topics, in line with the Council's priorities, taking into account the Corporate Strategy and those of officers and councillors for inclusion in a work programme agreed by the Corporate Overview Group.

Both Councillors and officers are required to complete a scrutiny matrix to outline a topic they would like to be considered for scrutiny. The matrix summarises the issue of concern as well as the key lines of enquiry for review.

Our work this year

During the year, the Group considered many service areas and issues within its scrutiny role, particularly:

- Conservation Areas – part two
- Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe
- Covid-19 Business Recovery Update
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Hedges and Hedgerows within the Borough
- Update on the Fairham Development.

Conservation Areas – part two

June 2022, saw a follow-up on previous scrutiny on Conservation Areas in April 2021 which left three items outstanding for discussion. A presentation was received from the Principal Planning Officer and the Project Officer - Conservation Area Review and the Group had a substantial debate covering:

- officer proposals for undertaking a Borough wide review of Conservation Areas
- non-designated heritage assets
- training for Councillors members in respect of conservation areas
- the creation of Conservation Area Advisory Committees or a Conservation/Heritage Planning Sub-Committee.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Identify and make known to the Council local groups who might be interested in leading the review process or to confirm that no such groups exist so that the Council may establish how many reviews it must lead.	Limited success - parishes approached directly and programme adjusted to allow works to progress
Develop a crowd sourced approach to the development of a local list of non-designated heritage sites.	Predicated on not being undertaken until we had an online accessible map that we could display the list on. Commissioning of this resource has taken longer than anticipated delaying progress
Support the officer developed mechanism for the addition of assets to a local list.	See above

Keep under review the need for a Conservation Area Advisory Committee or Heritage Planning Sub-Committee.	Remains under review
Incorporate material on the impact of planning proposals within a Conservation Area to all future planning training.	Conservation areas were included in the most recent planning training for ward members delivered in May 2023 following the Borough Council Election.

Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe

A scrutiny matrix was submitted to the Corporate Overview Group specifying that Councillors wanted to understand the situation in Rushcliffe regarding the sewerage infrastructure and any unlawful discharges. At its meeting in September 2022 presentations were received from Richard Cooper - Environment Agency covering outlining planning and wastewater from the perspective of the Environment agency and a presentation from Chris Bramley - Severn Trent Water which provided an overview of how Severn Trent identifies and understands the risks associated with development and what is being done to accommodate growth within Rushcliffe.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Ask relevant questions of the expert speakers in line with the enquiry provided in the scrutiny Matrix	These were answered at the scrutiny group meeting and no further action was required
Keep sewerage infrastructure and discharge within Rushcliffe under review and requested that this item be brought back to Growth and Development Scrutiny Group at a later date in the Work Programme	This item will return to Growth and Development Scrutiny Group for discussion at its meeting on 3 January 2024

Covid-19 Business Recovery Update

At its meeting on 21 September 2023 the Group were presented with an update on the Council's Covid 19 Business Recovery. A presentation was received from the Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property and the Economic Growth Officer which covered the work by officers to support businesses to recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic. After the substantial debate the Group were informed of five key areas of focus over the coming months to ensure ongoing support is provided for local businesses:

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)
- Rushcliffe Business Partnership
- Business Support (Bingham Enterprise Centre)
- High Street Support
- Growth Boards.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
<p>Support the officers proposed future activities identified incorporating support for the local economy</p>	<p>Further reports have been provided and future ones planned on the UKSPF which is now in year 2 of a 3 year programme of grant funding.</p> <p>The Economic Growth Team continue to support the Rushcliffe Business Partnership with fortnightly networking a quarterly business events focussed on different topics.</p> <p>The Bingham Enterprise Centre is now fully let and the businesses located there have had the opportunity to access free one to one business advice.</p> <p>The team have worked on a number of initiatives to support high street businesses including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a grant pot for shop front/premises improvements, energy efficiency measures, new equipment and digital projects • Digital High street support provided by a dedicated business support advisor – one to one support and series of webinars • Supporting with the establishment of retail forums/groups in a number of town centres • West Bridgford Way – website, social media and business networking to promote and encourage collaboration amongst businesses in West Bridgford. <p>A report to the October Growth and Development Scrutiny group will focus on a review of the Growth Boards which is currently being undertaken.</p>
<p>Recognise and acknowledge the efforts of those officers supporting local businesses and asked to be kept informed of projects for delivering support</p>	<p>Further reports have been provided to the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group on the UKSPF and associated business support projects. To be completed by CE</p>

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

In September 2022 the Government confirmed the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) funding. At the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group meeting on 4 January 2023 the Economic Growth Officer and Corporate and Commercial Projects Officer delivered a presentation to advise the Group of the three overarching investment priorities:

- Community and Place
- Business Support
- People and Skills.

The Economic Growth Manager outlined a range of projects that had been approved for the first year of funding and that work was being undertaken by Officers to explore opportunities for the second year including, joint commissioning across Nottinghamshire for business support activity, other project options for the Borough town centres and decarbonisation and cost of living support.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
Support officer's proposals and made suggestions for additional priorities and projects to support	The proposals for year 2 UKSPF funding were supported and so far a number of projects have been delivered. In addition, a grant pot has supported 11 community projects and 15 businesses.
Support the stakeholder engagement plan and identified additional groups for officers to engage with or alternative ways to engage with stakeholders	The Economic Growth team continue to engage with a wide variety of stakeholders as set out in the plan to inform development of plans for year 2 and now also year 3 (2024/25) of UKSPF and REPF.

Hedges and Hedgerows within the Borough

The Council had passed a motion to protect and enhance hedgerows in the Borough and had requested that a review of the legal and policy framework be conducted. At the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group meeting on 4 January 2023 the Ecology and Sustainability Officer and the Principal Policy Planner presented the group with an update on hedges and hedgerows in the Borough and the legal and policy framework that was in the control of the Council, namely the Rushcliffe Local Plan, as part of the Core Strategy and the Local Plan Part 2, and the Hedgerow Regulations, which identified hedgerows of importance to which the council could apply notice that they are to be retained or require an application to remove. The Group discussion covered:

- The success of the Local Plan Policy and monitoring indicators that met the requirements of planning legislation and enforcement
- Green belt and tree preservation

- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – New legislation.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
<p>Keep Hedges and Hedgerows under review and requested that a future item be presented to the Group with details of the requirements for the methodology for monitoring, enforcement and reporting for the purpose of new legislation with regards to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)</p>	<p>In relation to Biodiversity Net Gain and Hedgerow requirements within that; the Growth and Development Group discussed BNG arrangements at its meeting in July 2023 and approved the biodiversity net gain arrangements to be used by RBC, Cabinet is expected to consider this further on 10 October 2023. Biodiversity net gain is expected under current policies, and a 10% gain (in length or condition) is expected (although not mandatory), for hedgerows as part of this. From November 2023 (exact date not yet announced) it is expected that legally mandated BNG will be required, and this will mandate a 10% gain (in length or condition) of any hedgerows on the site, prior to all works for new development applications from that date.</p>
<p>The Council's approach to the management and maintenance of hedges and hedgerows and proposed some additional opportunities and external groups that the Council could engage for support and suggested the website be reviewed to ensure hedgerow protection information was up to date</p>	<p>The works on the Council's approach to the management and maintenance of hedges and hedgerows and additional opportunities and external groups that the Council could engage for support and the website review to ensure hedgerow protection information was up to date, is still to be undertaken</p>

Update on the Fairham Development

At its meeting on 8 March 2023 the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group were presented with an update on the Fairham development. Mr Hepwood, Mr Malick, Mr Richards and Mr Todhunter from Clownes Developments and Ms Hull and Mr Young from Homes England attended the meeting to assist with consideration of this item. The Group had a substantial debate covering:

- Management companies and the management of open spaces once the housing development is occupied
- Sustainable urban drainage systems and in particular foul sewer drainage across the entire development
- Highways infrastructure including bus services, tram extension, cycleways and pedestrian links
- Infrastructure including a new school and health centre.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – September 2023:
The progress on the site was in line with the original aspirations for the site	<p>Councillors were very happy with the update on the Fairham site.</p> <p>The Fairham Growth Board continue to meet quarterly with engagement from ward members, County Council and local town/parish councils.</p>
The Governance arrangements that were in place to support delivery of the development	Councillors were happy with the role and remit of the Fairham Growth Board.

Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

Looking forward to the year ahead

Growth and Development Scrutiny are looking forward to a comprehensive programme of scrutiny topics in 2023/24 that will deliver economic growth and ensure sustainable, prosperous and thriving communities.