

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW GROUP
TUESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2023**

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

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chairman), A Edyvean, L Plant, R Walker, L Way and G Williams

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor C Thomas

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C Caven-Atack

J Wilkinson
E Palmer

K Brennan
T Coop

Service Manager - Corporate
Services
Strategic Human Resources Manger
Communications and Customer
Services Manager
Finance Business Partner
Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors P Gowland

8 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

9 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 were approved as a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

10 Health and Safety Annual Report

The Strategic HR Manager presented the Health and Safety Annual Report which summarised the Council's occupational health and safety performance during the period 1 April 2022 to end March 2023, including health and safety policies, procedures and activities which have taken place during this period. The report also sets out the training programmes delivered, provided numerical and statistical data and the proposed health and safety objectives for the year.

The Strategic HR Manager highlighted the key objectives for the Group to consider for 2023/24 as follows:

- Review and update the policies that are over three years old

- Health and safety compliance audits across the authority
- Continue to support health and safety compliance at Streetwise
- Health and Safety Inspection at Rushcliffe Oaks
- Improvements to e-learning compliance rates for DSE e-learning courses by moving over to certification
- Continue to deliver appropriate workplace health initiatives in line with employee needs

Councillor Plant asked a specific question relating to the health and safety audit of Streetwise and asked how soon would the follow up work within the action plan be completed. The Strategic HR Manager explained that the audits carried out by Bolsover District Council highlighted that Streetwise Management were generally aware of their role and duties under the relevant health and safety legislation, however there been some confusion and lack of clarity in the documentation which was over complicated. The Strategic HR Manager added that regular toolbox meetings in respect of the internal procedures and bringing Streetwise under the restraints of the Council should resolve any shortfalls identified.

Councillor Way asked about the reporting of accidents at play parks and in particular open space areas of new housing estates. The Strategic HR Manager advised that incidents at Rushcliffe Country Park were reported to rangers and recorded, but in respect of accident data at other play areas across the Borough which are unmanned, unless accidents or faulty equipment are reported to the Parish, Town or the Borough Council we would not be made aware of any issues.

The Chairman asked whether the Council provides training for residents and staff at Rushcliffe Borough sites in using defibrillators. The Strategic HR Manager advised that as part of the health and safety programme refresher training is provided at all of the Council's sites and Lex Leisure also provide regular training which helps support cover within the Arena Council Offices. Sports providers are also encouraged to sign up to any training being provided to ensure they have adequate cover when using our community venues. In addition, the Group were informed that defibrillator locations were recorded on a national data base which is understood that East Midlands Ambulance has access to.

The Group congratulated officers for a positive report and expressed that the goal and objectives for next year were sensible and gave due regard to the issues arising from the past 12 months.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered the detailed information contained within the annual Health and Safety Report
- b) noted the change to the health and safety risk profile as a result of both Streetwise coming back in-house and the opening of Rushcliffe Oaks
- c) noted the significant progress made against the health and safety goals and objectives previously agreed by Corporate Overview Group for the financial

year 2022/23

- d) endorsed the proposed health and safety objectives for 2023/24 as set out in the report

11 Financial and Performance Management

The Finance Business Partner presented the Q1 position in terms of the Council's financial monitoring for 2023/24.

The Group were advised that there is a predicted net revenue budget efficiency of £0.55m for 2023/24 mostly as a result of favourable business rates. This represents a variance of 3.8% of Net Service Expenditure. However, this is expected to be earmarked for additional cost pressures in relation to inflation and the staff pay award. The position is likely to change as further variances are identified during the year.

The Group were advised of capital budget efficiencies expected to be around £6.5m, primarily due to Support for Registered Housing Providers (£2.723m), Gypsy and Traveller Site acquisition (£1m) and crematorium contingencies (£0.783m).

The Finance Business Partner advised of the main adverse variances arising from:

- Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium with the income budget being set assuming 60 cremations per month from the outset rather than a lower target allowing for the service to grow. Since opening in March, income has been lower than expected as the number of cremations is around 30 and rising.
- Streetwise are currently forecasting a budget pressure of £0.35m due to vehicle hire and the results of an independent report and recommendations linked to the way forward in relation to carbon reduction.
- Depot and contracts overspend on tyres due to both consumption and the increasing cost of rubber and a service payment for the car park SLA in relation to 2022/23
- £0.35m is also required in relation to a property related legal claim
- Increased income attributable to the Nottinghamshire Business Rates pool surplus, a lower Business Rates Levy and additional grant income are among the biggest favourable variances

In concluding the Finance Business Partner advised the Group there is an overall projected budget efficiency of £0.55m. However, inflation remains high and the consequential rising cost of living present a significant risk to the Council's budget. Furthermore, planned savings are falling short of expected targets and this adds further pressure.

The position on capital is currently positive and there is still no need for the Council to externally borrow this financial year.

Councillor Plant asked a specific question relating to the Gypsy and Traveller site allocation and the impact of illegal encampments on Council resources and expenditure. Councillor Edyvean explained that the Council is required to provide a permanent site for travellers not for those arriving illegally each year. A permanent site is being proposed at Fairham as part of the Local Plan part 2. The Finance Business Partner added that there is no additional funding for this provision, but the Council is committed to provide a site for seven caravans by 2025. It was suggested that a transit site be considered for the Travellers who arrive in the Borough annually.

Councillor Edyvean questioned the loss in value of the Council's Multi Asset investments (pooled funds) and whether this was a concern. The Finance Business Partner advised that these funds form part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy approved by Full Council.

Questions were asked of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium not meeting its expected income targets. The Group were advised that the Business Case had been overly optimistic and that the business needed time to grow. The Chairman of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group advised that a review of Rushcliffe Oaks had been reported to Growth and Development Scrutiny Group in July and a follow up meeting has been requested for its work programme.

A question was raised in respect of the projected underspend for the provision for support for Registered Housing Providers. The Finance Business Partner explained this is often difficult to spend and meetings were taking place with Registered Providers, developers and Homes England to explore opportunities. The Service Manager added that a report is being going to Communities Scrutiny Group regarding models for the provision of social housing.

The Communications and Customer Service Manager presented the Q1 Performance Scorecards which continued to show positive trends following the pandemic.

Two new strategic tasks have been added: ST1923_24 Deliver a targeted events, health, sports development programme across the Borough and ST1923_24 Deliver the Cotgrave and Keyworth Leisure Centre redevelopment including decarbonisation of Cotgrave Leisure Centre.

The Group were advised of five operational indicators missing their targets, these included:

LIDEG01 Percentage of householder planning applications processed within target times

LIDEG17 Percentage of planning enforcement inspections carried out in target time

LIFCS61a Percentage of calls answered in 60 seconds

LINS06 Cumulative number of fly tipping cases (against cumulative monthly comparison for last year)

LINS73b Income generated from parks, pitches and open spaces

Explanations were provided within appendices F and G of the report.

The Chairman of Communities Scrutiny Group asked a specific question in relation to the community hall at Bingham Arena and whether income from this was included in the strategic scorecard. The Communications and Customer Services Manager advised that the figure related to facilities directly operated by the Borough, for example Rushcliffe Country Park, pitches at Gresham and West Park, adding that Bingham Community Hall is operated in partnership with Lex Leisure and therefore not included in the figures reported.

The Chairman referred to planning enforcement and inspections and in particular the performance data seeming to indicate that targets were being consistently missed. The Service Manager – Corporate Services explained that the PI was reporting on the old targets and the reporting system was yet to be updated. Manual calculations of these PI were much more accurate and these were reported to the Group.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered the expected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £0.55m and proposals to earmark this for cost pressures
- b) considered the capital budget efficiencies of £6.457m
- c) considered the expected outturn position for Special Expenses to be £6.6K over budget
- d) identified exceptions to judge whether further information is required.

12 **Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes**

Councillor Thomas joined the meeting to present her matrix for Councillor diversity, recruitment and allowances. She explained that there are many barriers to becoming a Councillor including low incomes, childcare provision, students or the self-employed and part time workers, and how the Council may consider incentives or additional allowances such as childcare or loss of earnings allowances to help Councillors while attending Council meetings and business.

Councillor Thomas explained that there does not appear to be any mechanism for allowances and other support which needs to be publicised when recruiting Councillors. She added, the Council could look at alternative opportunities for virtual attendance at some of its meetings and training to help recruit a more diverse Council membership.

Councillor Thomas asked if there was anything further the Council could be doing to encourage diversity for Town and Parish Council's also and asked how Rushcliffe compares with similar boroughs or districts and supported this be scrutinised during the next election cycle.

The Chairman suggested that recruitment was the responsibility of each political party to attract Councillors to stand for election. In respect of allowances the Chair suggested this could filter through the recruitment process and by setting allowances at Council and providing clearer more accessible information on the

Council's website for potential candidates.

Councillor Edyvean stated he did not disagree with the background of the proposal for more diversity in respect of recruitment and would indeed like to see more diverse candidates coming forward but failed to see how scrutiny would benefit or improve the current process.

Councillor Walker explained that an independent Councillor does not receive the resources or support as those aligned to a political party and asked if the Council should perhaps consider providing a forum for independent candidates.

Members of the Group also suggested Rushcliffe Reports for promoting the role of a Councillor and social media platforms.

The Service Manager advised that officers do a lot of work in advance of an election and that there is a limit to what the Council can do. She proposed upstanding the Independent Remuneration Panel, a statutory requirement for the review of Councillor allowances, earlier in the next cycle to allow more Councillors to engage with the process. She also proposed to focus on the work of Councillors with short video clips on social media during democracy week in October and added that recruitment would be the driving force of the Member Development Group, who's next meeting is 25 September 2023.

The Group declined the scrutiny matrix as they felt diversity, recruitment and allowances was already covered by other Council Groups.

The Group considered four other new scrutiny Matrices submitted by officers.

The Scrutiny Matrix submitted by the Service Manager – Public Protection in respect of Smoke Control Areas in the Borough, currently limited to West Bridgford and Edwalton. The Environment Act 2022 came into force on 1 May 2022 and amends the Clean Air Acts by introducing civil penalties for smoke emissions in a smoke control area and strengthens offences in relation to the sale of certain solid fuels. Scrutiny will provide Councillors with the information and understanding to shape the Council's emerging policies on how the new provisions will be implemented across the Borough. It was agreed by the Group that this topic would be submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Group at its meeting on 5 October 2023.

The Scrutiny Matrix submitted by the Service Manager – Economic Growth and Property in respect of a Review of the Growth Boards with the current Growth Boards having been established in 2015 and the most recent review being 2019. Cabinet has recommended that a review be conducted around the current Boards Terms of Reference, a survey of Growth Board members to reflect on the work done and to consider priorities for future Boards, engagement with local businesses and other key stakeholders, review the retail findings which have been currently commissioned and then report to scrutiny to review options. It was agreed by the Group that this topic be submitted to the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group at its meeting on 4 October 2023.

The Scrutiny Matrix submitted by the Service Manager – Neighbourhoods in respect of the Use of Community Facilities and the income generated from community buildings, parks, pitches and open spaces raised concerns at the last meeting of the Corporate Overview Group and the Group proposed to schedule scrutiny to find out if the financial and performance targets were realistic, expectations of users, benchmarking against other authorities, marketing, other

ideas for usage, what is being done to improve income and what a difference the new booking system has made. It was agreed by the Group that this topic be submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Group work programme for July 2024 and a briefing note be circulated providing context in the meantime.

The Scrutiny Matrix submitted by the Service Manager – Neighbourhoods in respect of a Review of Canal and River Trust Partnership Funding including the access agreement between Rushcliffe Borough council and the Canal and River Trust for the Grantham Canal which is due to expire in 2024. It was agreed that this topic be submitted to the Communities Scrutiny Group at its meeting on 5 October 2023.

The Chairman suggested an item on mobile and broadband connectivity would be an opportunity for the Borough to improve connectivity for residents in more rural areas. It was noted this was not a Borough issue and is a matter for Nottinghamshire County Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered additional items for scrutiny from the current Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital and Investment Strategy and Transformation Plan
- b) determined any additional topics to be included in a scrutiny group work programme for 2023/24 for each of the scrutiny groups as presented on newly submitted scrutiny matrices
- c) reviewed the current work programme for each of the scrutiny groups.

Work Programme 2023-24 – Corporate Overview Group

7 November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairman ○ Feedback form Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Customer Feedback Annual Report ○ Corporate Strategy
20 February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairman ○ Feedback form Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○
XX June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairman ○ Feedback form Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Financial and Performance Management ● Rolling Items ○ Diversity Annual Report and update on the Equality and Diversity Strategy
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Work Programme 2023-24 – Governance Scrutiny Group

28 September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk Management Update ● Going Concern ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update ● Internal Audit Progress Report
23 November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Annual Audit Completion Report 2022/23 ● Statement of Accounts ● Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update ● Asset Management Plan
22 February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Internal Audit Strategy ● Risk Management Strategy ● Risk Management - Update ● Capital and Investment Strategy Update ● External Annual Audit Plan ● Annual Audit Letter and Value for Money Conclusion ● Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25
XX June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal Audit Progress Report ● Internal Audit Annual Report ● Annual Fraud Report ● Annual Governance Statement (AGS) ● Capital and Investment Strategy Outturn ● Constitution Update ● Code of Conduct

Work Programme 2023-24 – Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

4 October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How the Borough works with partners to plan for the infrastructure required to support growth ● Review of Growth Boards
3 January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sewerage Infrastructure and Discharge within Rushcliffe ● Management of Open Spaces
6 March 2024	
XX July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium

Work Programme 2023-24 – Communities Scrutiny Group

5 October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Housing Models ● Smoke Control Areas in the Borough ● Review of the Canal and River Trust Partnership Funding
18 January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flight Paths
21 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Streetwise In-Sourcing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon Management Plan Update
XX July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Community Facilities

13 **Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen**

The Chairman of the Communities Scrutiny Group highlighted the number of reports going to the Communities Scrutiny Group in October and asked if any of the items could be moved to a later meeting in the work programme. The Service Manager – Corporate Services explained that the items submitted for October were time critical and could not be moved. It was suggested that officer presentations are kept to a minimum and that the meeting starts earlier than scheduled. The Chairman of Communities Scrutiny Group agreed to speak to lead officers to propose an earlier time before the agenda is published.

14 **Feedback from Lead Officers**

The Service Manager – Corporate Services reminded the Group of the ongoing improvements for scrutiny, including Councillors who have submitted a scrutiny matrix to attend the next appropriate Corporate Overview meeting to address the Group and introduce their matrix.

The Group were advised that at the next cycle of meetings and going forward an electronic link will be added to each agenda item to remind members as to who and why the item was submitted for Scrutiny.

The Service Manager – Corporate Services advised the Scrutiny Group Chairman of some changes to the Scrutiny Annual Reports going to Council in September and explained the reports would focus on outcomes and feedback from the debate.

15 **Corporate Strategy 2023-2027**

The Service Manager – Corporate Services presented the Council's Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 ahead of adoption at Full council in December 2023.

The Group were advised that a public Consultation had taken place as part of the process and the results were presented within the report. It is proposed that the new Corporate Strategy retains the same general structure and content as the current document, which the group were reminded can be viewed on the Council's website.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) considered the results of the public consultation
- b) considered the draft action plan containing the strategic tasks and discussed any alterations required and
- c) requested the final draft of the Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 be brought to Corporate Overview Group in November 2023 for endorsement.

The meeting closed at 8.57 pm.

CHAIR

DRAFT