

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Corporate Strategy 2024 - 2027





Introduction from the Leader and Chief Executive

We are delighted to present our Corporate Strategy for 2024-2027. As we come to the end of our Corporate Strategy for 2019-2023, we reflect on the challenges faced not only nationally but globally that have affected us as a Council as well as our residents, businesses and communities.

We are proud as we look back on all that we have delivered and achieved for our residents and businesses, including:

- Opening the new Bingham Arena Leisure Centre, providing state of art, environmentally conscious leisure facilities.
- Development of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium, providing a modern and peaceful setting with a connection to the natural environment, for residents to say goodbye and remember their loved ones.
- Carbon neutral redevelopment of the Rushcliffe Country Park Visitor Centre including solar panels, an air source heat pump and electric vehicle charging.
- Remaining the lowest charging Council Tax authority in Nottinghamshire for band D properties.
- Delivering £36m worth of Covid grants, ensuring residents, businesses and community groups could access much needed support.

As we look forward to the next four years, we will be continuing to prioritise the environment. This includes protecting and enhancing our natural environment, ensuring that the Borough retains its green, rural identity, while accommodating significant housing growth. We will be working to minimise the impact of our service delivery on the environment and raising awareness about what we can all do to slow the speed of climate change, focusing on achieving our target of being Carbon Neutral by 2030.

We are committed to playing an active role in the redevelopment of the Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station site working closely with the site owners, Uniper, to ensure the decommissioning of the site and its transformation is managed in

an environmentally beneficial way, as well as delivering opportunities for future clean energy generation and local employment.

We will also be representing the Borough in the creation of a combined Mayoral Authority for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, a move that will see significant funding and responsibility being devolved from Central Government to the local area. We anticipate Mayoral elections taking place across the region in May 2024.

We are committed to doing everything we can in the next four years to deliver the high-quality services our residents expect alongside making a positive and proactive contribution to the environment.

We are always happy to hear from you. You can contact the Council via your local ward councillor or by emailing: customerservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk



Rushcliffe Borough Council
Cllr Neil Clarke MBE
Leader of the Council



Katherine Marriott
Chief Executive

What The Council Does

As well as delivering large scale projects the Council also delivers a range of services every day which make the Borough a great place to live and work.

These services include:



Streetwise

Street cleansing, graffiti removal, playground maintenance and the mowing of multiple open spaces and sports pitches.



Recycling2Go

Waste collection and recycling. The team empty 3.3 million bins a year.



Events

Delivering high quality family events all year round, welcoming over 30,000 residents and visitors to the Borough in 2023.



Benefits Processing

Ensuring those who are eligible access the support they need, processing over £12m of housing benefit in 2023.



Economic Growth

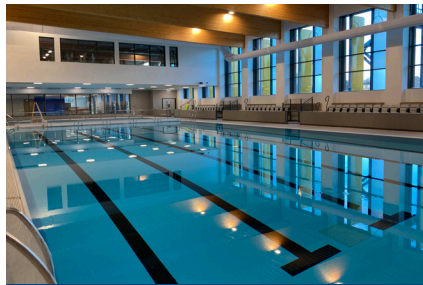
Supporting businesses large and small in the Borough to access funding and training.



Elections

Delivering Parliamentary, County, Borough and Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

What The Council Does



Leisure Centres

Five leisure centres with swimming pools, fitness suites and exercise rooms across the Borough.



Planning

Processing planning applications large and small. The team has processed 13,265 applications since 2019.



Rushcliffe Country Park

One of the nation's best country parks achieving the coveted Green Flag Award every year since 2017.



Council Tax and Business Rates

Collecting essential income and distributing it across public services in Nottinghamshire to fund the services residents value and need.



Environmental Health

Services including dog and pest control, food outlet inspections and enviro-crime investigations.



Strategic Housing

Working with partners to provide suitable accommodation for a range of residents, and to prevent homelessness.

The following services are provided by Nottinghamshire County Council:

- Highway maintenance including street lighting and potholes
- Transport
- Household waste recycling centres (tips)
- Libraries
- Schools
- Social care for children and adults
- Registration of births, deaths and marriages

The Council's Current Financial Position

The chart to the right shows the Council's net revenue expenditure in 2013/14 and 2023/24 and the proportion of this expenditure funded via grants from central Government.

Revenue expenditure is short term expenses, for example salaries, running costs (such as fuel), utilities and other day-to-day expenditure required to meet service delivery.

In 2013/14 the Council received 38% of its funding from central Government.

In 2023/24, the Council received only 15% of its funding from central Government.

This is in spite of increasing costs and the impact of inflation.

The Council has responded to this challenge positively, by taking a look at how it works to make sure it is as efficient as possible. The Council developed a Transformation and Efficiency Plan, identifying where it could make changes to how it operates, for example, using different systems or processes. This has resulted in a saving of £4.5m since 2015 with a further £1.5m planned by 2027/28.

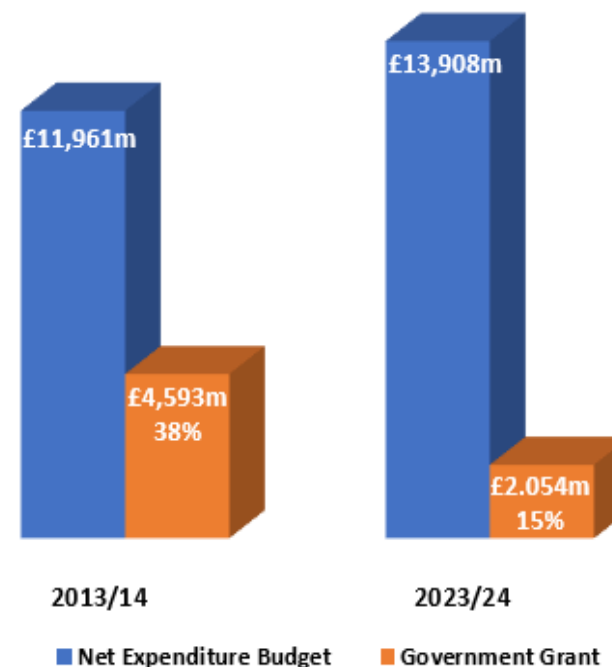
The Council has also had to consider how it makes the most of its assets and generate additional income where possible, although recent Government restrictions in relation to accessing any future funds for borrowing now limit the Council's ability to generate further income from commercial property transactions.

The Council has maintained its position as the lowest charging Council Tax authority in Nottinghamshire and in the lowest 25% in the country. The Council has also grown its commercial income streams to just under £3m per year supporting the Council to become financially self-sufficient and maintaining its debt free position despite tough challenges.

Over the last four years, the Council has continued to invest in its communities with:

- £18m invested in a brand-new leisure centre, community hall and enterprise centre in Bingham. The Council will be investing further in improving the leisure centres in Cotgrave and Keyworth, including decarbonisation plans.
- Significant enhancements at Rushcliffe Country Park including a new café, Changing Places toilet and upgrade to the visitors' centre.
- Approving a carbon neutral target for the Council for 2030 and creating a £1m Climate Change Reserve to deliver this goal.
- 26 electric car charging points installed Borough-wide.

Net Revenue Expenditure and Government Grant



The Council's Priorities



The Environment



Quality of Life



Sustainable Growth



Efficient Services

This Strategy sets the overall direction the Council is planning to take over the next four years. There are four priorities for the Council.

These priorities are as relevant today as they were four years ago when they were chosen and the Council has decided to keep them. This also enables the Council to track progress against each priority.

Within each of these priorities, the Council has made a commitment to deliver a number of tasks over the next four years. These are detailed in the following pages.

The Council will review progress and whether these tasks remain current and achievable on an annual basis. Where additional tasks are identified that will contribute to the Council's priorities, they can be added to the action plan and delivered and monitored alongside existing tasks.

The Environment

The Council knows that the natural environment is precious and not something anyone can afford to take for granted. The Council is fully committed to playing its part in protecting the environment today and enhancing it for future generations.

The Council has already taken steps to ensure that, where it can, it is making changes to operate in a more environmentally responsible way. This has led to a 59% reduction in carbon emissions since 2008/09 (as of 2021/22). This is a fantastic achievement so far, with more work to be done to ensure the Council achieves its target of being net-zero in its own operations by 2030.

Being a green Borough is not just about carbon reduction and energy efficiency activity, it is also about preserving the green and rural nature of the Borough. The Council is committed to nature conservation, working to strike the right balance between facilitating necessary development without sacrificing the Borough's rural identity that the Council and so many residents value. Nature conservation is also vital for wildlife in the Borough as well as for its role in mitigating the effects of climate change.



2019 - 2023 Key Achievements

- Establishment of the Big Business Carbon Club – bringing together the Borough's big businesses to share their insights and skills, supporting one another to make an even greater impact on their carbon reduction journeys.
- Carbon neutral redevelopment of Rushcliffe Country Park Visitor Centre including solar panels, an air source heat pump and electric vehicle charging.
- Installation of an electric cremator at the new Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium which will reduce potential emissions by 80%.
- Installation of £367k of carbon reduction technology in the new Bingham Arena reducing its carbon footprint by 78% compared to a standard leisure centre.
- Purchase of all of the Council's electricity supply from a renewable source.
- Participation in the County and City-wide Green Rewards Scheme which encourages residents to make changes to their lifestyle and habits, reducing their carbon foot print.
- Provision of the free tree scheme – 11,475 trees provided to residents, community groups and town and parish councils since 2019.
- Development of a Parish Council Climate Change Pack and delivery of free energy consultations for five Parish Councils in 2023.

The Environment

2024 - 2027 Strategic Tasks

1. Deliver Rushcliffe's Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030.

Playing our part in tackling climate change, and protecting and enhancing nature conservation in the Borough.

The Council has set a target of being carbon neutral in its own operations by 2030. It recognises that the environment is of great importance to residents in Rushcliffe and that the Council must work collectively with residents and businesses to make the greatest possible impact for the Borough now, and for future generations.

The Climate Change Strategy focuses on three key areas:

- **Council** – Reducing the emissions associated with the Council's buildings and activities.
- **Conservation** – Protecting and increasing green spaces, for residents to enjoy, for wildlife to thrive and to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- **Community** – Supporting residents and businesses to reduce their emissions.

While you might not always be able to see all the effects of this work as you are out and about in the Borough, you may notice more 'no mow' wildflower areas, more solar panels and EV chargers. These things are all contributing to the overall target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

2. Implement the Environment Act commitments.

Fulfilling obligations as a Local Authority to make environmental improvements in relation to waste, resource efficiency, air quality, water, nature and biodiversity, and conservation.

The Environment Act is likely to include the following requirements:

- Doorstep weekly food waste collections for all households.
- Changes to the items that can be recycled in the Council's kerbside wheeled bin recycling service to achieve national consistency.
- A national deposit return scheme for plastic bottles.
- Restrictions on the use of domestic burning appliances in new Smoke Control Areas.
- Introduction of a Biodiversity Net Gain Duty which means that when planning permissions are granted the end development must have 10% more biodiversity than before development took place.

Based on known information from the Government the Council is already considering the impact of the expected changes, and considering how it will approach implementation including timescales for requirement in the Act.

Implementation of these proposals will be a complex piece of work. The Council is already working in partnership with other councils across Nottinghamshire to determine how to implement changes most effectively for residents.

Quality of Life

Residents' quality of life will always be a priority for the Council. Quality of life is all about how residents feel about living in the Borough, its environment, and the community facilities they can access.

The Council knows from the 2021 residents' survey that 84% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live. This is fantastic, but not something the Council takes for granted. It is important for the Council to continue to work hard to ensure that the Borough remains a great place to live, work and socialise.



2019 - 2023 Key Achievements

- Opening of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium, providing a modern and peaceful setting with a connection to the natural environment, for residents to say goodbye and to remember their loved ones.
- Opening of Bingham Arena Leisure Centre, providing state of art, environmentally conscious leisure facilities alongside a new Enterprise Centre with 12 office units for local businesses.
- Creation of Upper Saxondale Parish Council, providing residents in the area more direct representation.
- Securing £3.9m Rough Sleepers Initiative award as part of a countywide partnership to extend services to tackle rough sleeping, including health related outreach services.
- Accessing Safer Street funding, securing extra resources to tackle neighbourhood crime, anti-social behaviour as well as violence against women.
- Achievement of 549 successful homelessness preventions, and delivery of homelessness prevention training sessions to over 1653 young people in schools across Rushcliffe since 2019.
- Development at Gresham Sports Park which includes the installation of a second 3G pitch, the resurfacing of the existing 3G pitch, grass pitch improvements and pavilion upgrade.
- Confirmation that 84% of residents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, via the residents' survey in 2021.

2024 - 2027 Strategic Tasks

3. Be an active partner in the delivery of the East Midlands Devolution Deal.

Ensuring that Rushcliffe is represented and benefits, as plans progress for a combined authority for the East Midlands.

The East Midlands Devolution Deal will create the first ever Mayoral Combined County Authority and is expected to bring an extra £38m a year to the East Midlands from 2024, addressing years of historically low investment in the area. The deal also involves the devolving of some powers from a national to a regional level, with the election of a regional Mayor for the East Midlands.

The Council believes it is important to be part of this piece of work which will change the way decisions are made locally. This an opportunity to champion the ability of district councils as well as be part of the process to shape the future combined authority.



4. Deliver Rushcliffe's Leisure Strategy 2021-2027.

Making sure that leisure facilities continue to meet the needs of residents over the next four years and beyond.

The Council's excellent leisure facilities are one of the many reasons why the Borough is such a fantastic and well-regarded place to live. The successful delivery of the Leisure Strategy will include:

- Retaining five indoor leisure facilities ensuring they are fit for the future.
- Refurbishment of Cotgrave Leisure Centre and Keyworth Leisure Centre.
- Addressing inequalities in participation, to provide access to sport and recreation for all residents.
- Working in partnership with local health services to support 'the inactive' into regular activity.
- Maintaining the existing local standards for provision of open spaces, children's' play areas and allotments.
- Creating more outdoor wellbeing opportunities including walking and cycling throughout the Borough.

Sustainable Growth

Rushcliffe is determined to play its part in shaping the future of the Borough ensuring the needs and aspirations of Rushcliffe residents are met in all future developments.

This involves a significant amount of partnership working as delivering upon the commitments outlined below will require the participation of a number of different stakeholders. The Council accepts that sometimes it will be leading and sometimes supporting others to deliver what communities need to grow in a sustainable way.

As part of the Council's commitment to sustainable growth, it wants to make certain that it is supporting the growth of communities, not just the building of new homes. This means ensuring that new developments have the community infrastructure they need including green spaces, parks, play areas and community spaces, as well as working on linking new developments to existing settlements with established communities.

The Council is equally committed to ensuring that residents have access to a great mix of job opportunities within the Borough and that local businesses have the support they need to thrive, providing employment in communities as well as an important variety of retail and leisure options for residents.



2019 - 2023 Key Achievements

- Facilitated the delivery of 3,305 new homes in the Borough since 2019, including 450 at Cotgrave, 1,277 at Sharphill, 429 at Bingham and 115 at RAF Newton.
- Commenced development at Fairham with first the employment buildings handed over to clients, and some of the 3,000 homes approved occupied by Christmas 2023.
- Approved development of a commercial unit, 14,000sqm, for a warehouse and distribution business alongside the A46.
- Facilitated the delivery of 856 new affordable homes.
- Adopted the Local Plan Part 2, allocating 23 housing sites that will deliver around 3,000 new homes.
- Adopted the Ratcliffe on Soar Local Development Order, working with the site owner to shape future plans at the Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station Site after decommissioning in 2024.



2024 - 2027 Strategic Tasks

5. Support Uniper in the redevelopment of the Ratcliffe on Soar site, during and post decommissioning of the power station.

Securing a positive contribution from the site for the Borough and region, post decommissioning of the power station.

The power station, owned by Uniper, will close at the end of September 2024 in line with Government policy to end coal-fired power generation.

The site has the potential to be redeveloped in the best interest of the Borough and wider region, leveraging international investment to pioneer zero-carbon technology, sustainable and low-carbon energy production creating thousands of high-skilled, well-paid jobs.

The Council's involvement includes:

- Helping to shape plans as they develop through the Council's role on the board of the East Midlands Development Corporation.
- Processing detailed planning applications for the site called Certificates of Compliance.
- Working with the landowner on the Local Development Order.
- Taking responsibility for changes to the business rates regime for the site, due to its Freeport status, in the Council's role as the billing authority.

6. Implement Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill commitments.

Fulfilling the Council's obligations to adopt reforms, primarily to the planning system, facilitating more local decision making.

The Council has a legal obligation to comply with relevant legislation. A new Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill is expected in the next year which seeks to change the way powers can be devolved to local authorities and introduces reform to the planning system in England. Once the Bill receives Royal Assent and becomes an Act, there will be a significant number of new regulations relating to the planning process which the Council will have to implement.

The Council will need to consider any new regulations that come forward and determine an approach for adopting them. It is already working to consider the impact of the expected changes but it is not possible to precisely foresee what might be included in the final legislation.



2024 - 2027 Strategic Tasks

7. Adopt a Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan.

Setting out a strategic vision for future development in the Borough, which will be used to decide future planning applications and other significant planning decisions.

The Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (GNSP) replaces the Council's Part 1 Aligned Core Strategy. It will play a large part in determining what Rushcliffe looks and feels like in 2041. The GNSP is important as it fundamentally shapes the development that takes place in Rushcliffe (including type, scale and design quality), where and what infrastructure is required to support that development. Once adopted, any planning application which is considered by the Council will need to demonstrate it is in line with GNSP if it is to receive planning permission.

Great care has been taken by the Council in its preparation of the Plan to make sure Rushcliffe balances the housing and employment growth with ensuring Rushcliffe remains a place where residents are happy to live.



8. Develop and deliver an Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough.

Ensuring that the local economy remains productive, innovative and sustainable. A thriving local economy benefits residents economically, socially and environmentally. It means access to quality jobs within the Borough and to a diverse range of places to shop, socialise and access services.

To ensure that the local economy remains thriving, the Council will develop and deliver an Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough.

This strategy will help the Council to better understand the diversity of local economies across the Borough and identify where to focus efforts and resources to help businesses build resilience, adapt to new opportunities and improve productivity.



2024 - 2027 Strategic Tasks

9. Support the delivery of the new employment sites and new homes, including meeting affordable housing targets, at key sites including Fairham, Gamston, RAF Newton and Bingham.

Providing the right amount, quality and mix of housing and employment sites to ensure the Borough remains a place people want to live and work whilst embracing growth.

The Council needs to support and facilitate the delivery of these key allocated sites. This is to ensure growth is controlled where possible and safeguards against unwanted developments where it does not align with the Council's vision for the Borough.

Each key housing site includes an allocation of employment land sitting alongside it reflecting the fact that with new residents there is a need for new jobs and business opportunities.

The Council's role in the development of these key sites includes:

- Facilitating and supporting co-operation and delivery on larger development sites.
- Ensuring there are appropriate developer contributions for infrastructure on these key sites.
- Receiving and determining planning applications on these key sites and engaging with key stake holders.
- Working with relevant developers and agents to explore opportunities for accelerating delivery of employment land allocations through economic growth initiatives.
- Promoting community cohesion between new and existing conurbations.

The Council is committed to ensuring that appropriate community infrastructure and the right level of community provision is delivered as part of new homes and employments sites. The Council has, therefore, committed to developing a local community venue for hire within the Sharpill Woods sustainable urban extension, to meet the future needs of the area.



Efficient Services

As an organisation it is always the Council's intention to deliver the best services for residents in the most efficient way possible.

In the coming years, the Council will continue embracing new ways of working and be open to innovation and transformation.

As much as the Council takes pride in delivering exciting new projects and activities, it never loses sight of its core purpose to provide high quality services for residents every day. That is why a focus on efficient services remains a priority for the Council over the next four years.



2019 - 2023 Key Achievements

- Being shortlisted for Local Authority of the Year 2023 in the MJ Awards, the smallest local authority on the shortlist.
- Remaining the lowest Council Tax authority in Nottinghamshire for band D properties, charging £137.39 in 2023.
- Taking a proactive approach to making grant payments to residents and businesses, was one of only four local authorities that paid out all energy rebates by the end of June 2022 – 36,755 grants paid out totalling £5,513,250.
- Paid £36,014,484 in Covid Grants ensuring residents, businesses and community groups got the support they needed.
- Successfully introducing voter ID for the first time at the 2023 local election with only 0.1% of voters unable to vote due to not presenting a valid photo ID.



2024 - 2027 Strategic Tasks

10. Deliver good value for money in Council operations for residents.

A combination of Government funding reductions and uncertainty over future funding, the impact of Covid and more recently high inflation has placed significant pressure on both Council finances and maintaining excellent services. It remains important for the Council to be financially self-sufficient and demonstrate value for money in all areas of operation.

In each year of this Corporate Strategy, the Council will:

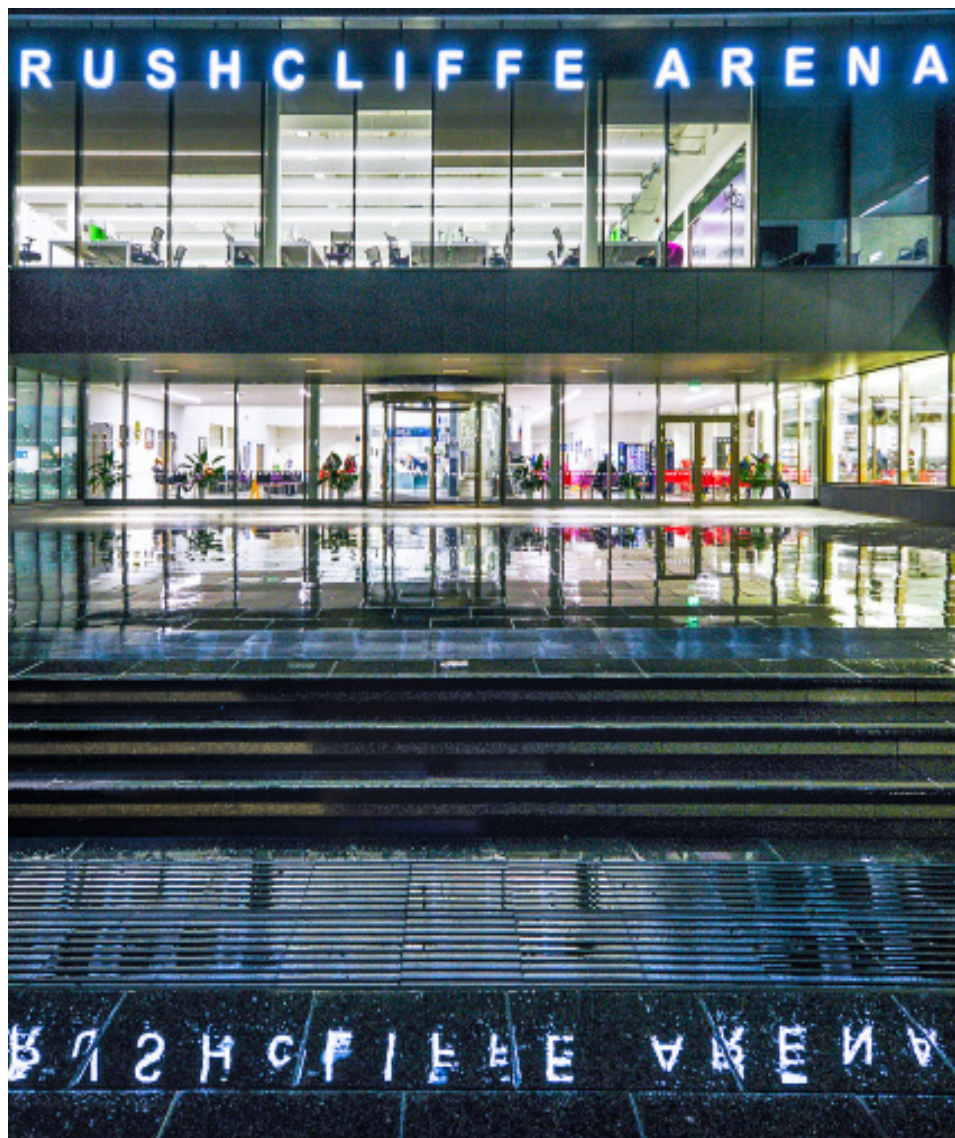
- Deliver a balanced budget.
- Adequately resource the Council's Capital Programme commitments, which must be affordable, sustainable and prudent.
- Receive a positive value for money conclusion from the Council's external auditor.

11. Participate in an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and implement recommendations.

Ensuring the Council continues to operate effectively and deliver great quality services for residents by inviting external review and implementing its recommendations.

The Council wishes to remain a high performing, well respected local authority that delivers the services its residents need, whilst maintaining financial self-sufficiency. To do this, it periodically invites the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a Peer Review. This review will identify what the Council is doing well, but most importantly what it could be doing better.

The LGA Peer Review team will visit Rushcliffe in January 2024. After this, the Council will receive a report with a number of recommendations of ways that it could improve. These recommendations will form the basis of the action plan which the Council will commit to delivering.



2024 - 2027 Strategic Tasks

12. Conduct a review of the Council's asset base.

Ensuring the Council understands the value and purpose of its assets including property, land, equipment and vehicles and takes decisions arising from the assessments.

The Council must have a comprehensive understanding of its assets with the objective of ensuring they are working for the benefit of the Borough's residents and businesses in delivery of services.

Cyclical reviews and asset challenge are essential to ensure the objective continues to be met: the right assets in the right place at the right cost.

Reviewing these assets involves assessing a range of factors, including:

- The suitability of the asset, to determine whether they are still serving their intended purpose.
- Operational efficiency – is the asset in the right place and meeting its service objectives?
- Condition of the asset.
- Current and future cost of holding the asset.
- New opportunities for income generation or savings to be realised.
- Disposal, alternative uses and/or enhancement or investment.

These reviews will allow the Council to continue to make informed decisions about the future of its assets, how they are key in linking to effective and efficient service delivery as well as transformation savings and planning for future investment.





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