

Communities Scrutiny Group

Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Group 2023/24 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. This Group specifically focuses upon the Council's community partnerships, areas of community concern and the Council's responsibility to be environmentally sustainable.

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

- Reviewing the Council's partnerships to ensure that community needs are being met and the partnership is providing good value for money.
- Identifying areas of community concern, exploring how this can be met and making recommendations to that effect.
- Considering concerns specific to the local area in terms of health and wellbeing and making recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.
- Considering projects and initiatives to further the Council's efforts to protect the environment of the Borough and promote environmental sustainability to our residents.

Councillor Gareth Williams
Chair



Councillor Liz Plant
Vice-Chair



What are we responsible for?

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

- Review of Canal and Rivers Trust Partnership Funding
- Social Housing Models
- Smoke Control Areas in the Borough
- East Midlands Airport - impacts of future flight path changes and aircraft noise in general
- Carbon Management Plan Update
- Streetwise Update.

Review of Canal and Rivers Trust Partnership Funding

The Group received a presentation from the Canal and Rivers Trust which provided an overview of the geographical area and the work of the Canal and River Trust Partnership. The Group learned that Rushcliffe Borough Council had signed a twenty year service level agreement with British Waterways in 2003, which was due for renewal in 2024, and were presented with four possible options to consider for a future agreement.

The Group learned that the Canal and Rivers Trust had received one off UKSPF funding to cover reed clearance in specific areas of the canal but that ongoing clearance would require a reed clearance management plan. In relation to water, the Group was informed that whilst works such as reed clearance would support water retention, to make a significant difference would require separate culvert repairs at approximately £100k per culvert.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Receive a summary presentation of the work that has been undertaken by the Council in partnership with the Canal and River Trust (CRT)	The Group said that the canal was well used by a wide section of the community and noted the positive difference in funded maintenance of the canal in Rushcliffe. The Group noted that maintenance of the canal barriers was funded though the current funding

	agreement and that removal of any would require consultation
Comment on the strategic ambitions of the CRT for any future Service Level Agreement and the associated funding required for this work	The Group recommended a future funding agreement with the Council for 'Enhanced Environmental Management at £78,265', which would be reported into the Council's budget setting process. The council's budget challenge workshop decision was to reduce the funding to £24,000. The budget was endorsed by Cabinet on 13 February 2024 and approved at Full Council on 7 March 2024 see also <u>Enc. 3 for 2024/25 Budget and Financial Strategy</u> . A new SLA based on this figure is being negotiated with the Canal and Rivers Trust

Social Housing Models

The Group received a presentation from the Strategic Housing Manager which set out the Council's approved policy and operational framework for the provision of affordable housing, the different delivery models and the current approach to meet housing need.

The Group was informed that in 2003 the Council had transferred its housing stock to Metropolitan Housing Thames Valley who were currently the largest registered housing provider in the Borough, of approximately 15 in total. The Group was informed that the Council was responsible for managing the allocation of social rented housing in the Borough which it did through the housing register.

The Group asked a variety of questions, in particular about affordable rented properties, shared ownership, and the number of empty properties in the Borough.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Scrutinise the information provided by officers on the Council's current approach to the provision of social housing	The Group scrutinised the information presented, in particular regarding affordable housing. Further information on affordable housing needs will be published in the Greater Nottingham and Ashfield Housing Needs Update (March 24) in the Autumn 2024

Smoke Control Areas in the Borough

The Group received an update from the Environmental Health Officer about Smoke Controls Areas who explained that smoke control areas were first introduced as part of the 1956 Clean Air Act and that Rushcliffe had had smoke control areas in place since the 1970s. Whilst legislation had had an impact on air quality, it continued to pose the biggest environmental risk to public health.

The Group was informed that the Council had signed up to the Nottinghamshire Clean Air Strategy and had its own Clean Air Strategy Action Plan.

The Group was informed that there was a legal requirement for the Council to undertake a public consultation exercise before introducing a smoke control order. As part of that process the Council was seeking for the Group to indicate its preferred option which would be considered as part of the consultation.

In response to questions, the Group was informed that a list of Defra approved stoves and fuels could be found on the Defra website and that authorised fuels could continue to be burnt on approved stove appliances. The Group learned that businesses selling appliances and fuels would be managed by Trading Standards.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Consider the options provided for smoke control areas within the Borough	<p>The Group voted unanimously in favour of Option D - Revoke the existing Smoke Control Orders and seek to declare a Smoke Control Order to cover the entire Borough. A six week public consultation on a proposed Borough wide Smoke Control Area indicated approximately 80% of the 1206 respondents did not agree with the proposal.</p> <p>At Cabinet on 14th May 2024 it was resolved that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the existing Smoke Control Area coverage remains unchanged for a period of two years, at which time it will be reviewed; and b) the development and delivery of a public awareness campaign around domestic burning be approved
Indicate a preferred option enabling public consultation to take place	
Recommend its preferred option to Cabinet for adoption	

East Midlands Airport

The Group received a presentation about East Midlands Airport’s passenger and freight travel, noting that passenger numbers in summer 2023 had returned to 95% of pre-pandemic levels but that there had been a drop in air freight volume due to changes in the economy and the war in Ukraine

In relation to East Midlands Airport’s Corporate Social Responsibility, the Group were informed that it included supporting decarbonisation of the entire aviation industry to be net zero by 2038, supporting career and employment opportunities, and providing funding and support to community groups and community projects.

In relation to noise, the Group were informed that there were six noise monitors positioned around the airport boundary and that new actions were being considered,

including a ban on the noisiest rated aircraft at night, noise charges to incentivise quieter aircraft and a reduction of jet aircraft training flight hours.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
Consider the information presented and provided feedback to the EMA representatives	In response to concerns expressed regarding noise disturbance, the Group were asked to direct resident complaints directly to the EMA website
The Council running a publicity campaign to promote the EMA complaints procedure	A publicity and accompanying social media campaign ran in early February successfully and was also covered across the council's weekly newsletters to residents and stakeholders. Information about the EMA Community Fund and Insulation Grant Fund was promoted across the Council's social media channels
Request that the EMA Community Fund and Insulation Grant Fund be shared and promoted across the Council's social media channel	

Carbon Management Plan Update

The Community Development Manager presented an update on the Carbon Management Plan to the Group and explained that the Council had developed a roadmap towards achieving net zero by 2030 and had also made a commitment, in line with national and international governments, to be Net Zero as a Local authority Area by 2050.

The Group was updated on the successful completion of a number of projects and was advised that the Council was mapping its transport and emissions to inform its vehicle replacement programme. The Group learned that the Council was looking at further installation of EV charge points across the Borough and was considering its supply chains. The Council was also looking at how it collected waste, its data centre emissions, staff travel and had moved to procure its electricity from renewable sources. In relation to carbon sequestration, the Group was informed that a report had been completed for the Borough, which had identified that approximately 46 hectares of tree planting would be required to achieve neutrality by 2030.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024
Consider the progress to date of the adopted carbon management action plan	Following discussed at the meeting further information was shared with the Group, including information on how many homes had received solid wall insulation, information about BNG measures and information about housing providers and their decarbonisation plans
Contribute towards the emerging carbon management actions for 2024/25	The Group supported the move towards introducing HVO powered refuse vehicles

	<p>but cautioned the need to monitor where the HVO was sourced. The Group thought it important to remain open to technology developments and to promote education around waste reduction as well as waste management. The Group also commented on use of electric powered hand tools, expansion of the EV charging network across the Borough and providing communications for towns and parishes and residents. Mandatory BNG was enacted on all major developments (apart from those exempt) from 12 February 2024 and all minor developments (apart from those exempt) from 2 April 2024 This requires the delivery of 10% BNG on developments with applications made from that date</p>
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Streetwise Update

The Group received a high level overview on the insourcing of Streetwise from the Streetwise Manager, including future focus and performance information. The Group learned that initial tasks of the Council had been to review operations, including the management structure, the existing business including asking customers for feedback, scheduling of works, forward planning of works, the consistency and quality of work and the embracing of technology to improve and streamline operations.

The Group was informed that the Council had invested in depot improvements and had created a new website which allowed it to streamline enquiries through the Customer Contact Centre and create a resource for all Streetwise related information.

In relation to the future, the Group was informed that Streetwise would continue to prioritise works in the Borough, build relationships with key partners and build its sales and marketing Strategy to better sell services, look at cost reduction and explore apprenticeship options.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2024:
<p>Consider the information provided and provide feedback on the overall performance of Streetwise</p>	<p>The Group referred in particular to the litter picking stations, promoting information to schools about littering and recycling, provision of sandbags during recent flooding and future resilience through local stores. Further information about litter picking groups and Streetwise educational material has been circulated to all Councillors through Councillor Connections</p>

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

The Communities Scrutiny Group is looking forward to developing a comprehensive work programme for the year ahead.