

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2024

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 A Brown (Chair), J Cottee (Vice-Chair), M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
S Pregon	Monitoring Officer
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillor S Dellar

24 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Parekh declared an interest in Item 10a Notices of Motion.

25 Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 July 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 18 July 2024 were approved as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

26 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor referred to the 22 events he had attended over the summer, including the very successful Lark in the Park and West Bridgford Food Festival, together with Merchant Navy Day, which had included a very moving speech made by a World War 2 veteran. He reminded Councillors of the importance of honouring all those who had made the ultimate sacrifice, by supporting both Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. The Mayor went on to say that he had enjoyed the Bavarian Beer Festival in Bingham, the West Bridgford Horticultural and Allotment Society annual show and the Hickling

Scarecrow Festival. The Mayor concluded by referring to a recent book launch he had attended in Lady Bay, for an eight year old author, Binuthi Gunasekara, and what a fantastic event it was.

27 Leader's Announcements

The Leader welcomed Sara Pregon to her first official meeting as Monitoring Officer. The Leader highlighted the recent award won by the Council from the Boots and Berets Organisation, for the excellent Proms in the Park event, and he thanked officers responsible for organising it. The Leader referred to the Chief Executive's recent announcement that she would be leaving to take on a new role as Chief Executive at North Kesteven District Council, he congratulated her and stated that her departure would be a great loss to the Council.

28 Chief Executive's Announcements

There were no Chief Executive's Announcements.

29 Citizens' Questions

No citizens' questions were received for this meeting.

30 Petitions

In accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme, the Mayor invited Mr Kerr to present the petition entitled 'Community Governance Review.'

Mr Kerr introduced himself as Chair of Barton in Fabis Parish Council and stated that the petition sought the removal of the new Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) at Fairham from the parish of Barton in Fabis, to allow the formation of a new parish Council at Fairham. Mr Kerr briefly outlined details of the location and history of the parish and referred to the ongoing development pressures faced in this rural location. Mr Kerr stated that the new SUE, which had been removed from the Greenbelt would be a standalone development, differing greatly from the small, rural parish of Barton in Fabis. Mr Kerr was concerned that if Fairham remained part of the ancient parish, the interests of the current community would be overwhelmed, and the residents of Fairham deserved their own representation. Mr Kerr advised that the new boundary had been drawn along the Greenbelt, as that represented the natural boundary between the SUE and the rural land beyond. Should the validated petition be accepted, there was sufficient time for the boundary changes to be effective in time for the next elections in 2027.

31 Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, Councillor Upton presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth detailing the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (GNSP).

In moving the recommendation, Councillor Upton referred to the Council's statutory duty to review and adopt a new Local Development Plan, which had

taken several years to prepare, in conjunction with Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham City, and advised that it was critical that the current Plan was updated, to secure sustainable development and growth. Councillor Upton referred to the significant public consultation already undertaken, together with the meetings of the cross party Local Development Framework (LDF) Group, where at its last meeting, members present had unanimously resolved to accept the draft document and submit it to Full Council for approval.

Councillor Upton referred to the recent consultation on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which suggested a transitional period, where not all of the updates had to be completely reflected in local plans, if they had reached a certain stage, and it was thought that the current timeline would meet those new rules, providing Rushcliffe's Plan was published for consultation by next month. Without approval this evening, Councillor Upton stated that this transitional window would be lost, with the Plan unable to go forward, leaving the Council without an up to date Plan. Each council would have to individually agree and adopt the Plan, and that would be followed by a six week public consultation, and then onto a public examination.

Councillor Upton referred to Policy 3, which related to Housing Targets and advised that as part of the transitional arrangements, the Plan was only able to be adopted if each councils' annualised housing target was within 200 dwellings throughout the Plan period, with those housing targets detailed in Table 1 of Policy 3 in the report. Council noted that Rushcliffe had more than sufficient existing housing supply to meet the Borough's proposed housing target as detailed in Paragraph 4.33. Economic and employment land had also been carefully considered in draft Policy 5, together with Policy 10, which required all developments to aspire to the highest standards of design and materials. Councillor Upton concluded by thanking all those involved in preparing this report, including partners, officers, in particular the Planning Policy Manager, and members of the LDF Group.

Councillor Butler seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Calvert referred to the long history of close collaboration across the county, including the formation of the Greater Nottingham Planning Partnership in 2008. Governance was provided by a Joint Planning Advisory Board (JPAB), and those arrangements had remained, with the same Board overseeing the development of this Plan. Councillor Calvert felt that the LDF Group had considered the Plan in depth, and he echoed the thanks given to officers; however, he felt that the Group's ability to influence the Plan was very limited, and it was difficult to grasp the complexities of the individual policies. Councillor Calvert also considered this to be an awkward time to consider the Plan, due to the recent change in Government, together with the ongoing NPPF consultation. Nevertheless, Councillor Calvert confirmed that the Labour Group would vote in favour of the recommendations, which did not mean a wholesale approval of the Plan, rather it was to allow the Plan to go to the next stage of consultation and examination.

As a member of the LDF Group, Councillor S Mallender acknowledged and thanked all those involved for their hard work and was pleased to see the

emphasis on climate change mitigation. Council was reminded that Rushcliffe was different to other councils, given its older age profile, which particularly affected those living in rural areas. She was pleased to see the standards being suggested for carbon neutral developments; however, it was disappointing that Rushcliffe did not have a target for area-wide carbon neutrality. Councillor Mallender stated that the Green Group also shared some reservations and reiterated that the LDF Group had agreed that the Plan should be published for public consultation, rather than approving the document in its entirety.

The Leader acknowledged that the LDF Group had voted in favour of taking the Plan forward and reiterated the importance of not missing the transitional window, and he thanked Councillor Upton, all members of the LDF Group and officers for their hard work on this significant project.

Councillor Barney reiterated those thanks, acknowledged the excellent collaborative working and referred to the importance of adopting the Plan to protect local communities.

Councillor Birch also thanked officers but advised that he would not be voting for the Plan, as it would be an endorsement of mass housing development. He expressed concerns about the Ratcliffe on Soar Freeport site and also about the Tollerton Airfield site.

Councillor Chewings stated that his main objection related to the proposed loss of Tollerton Airport and highlighted the significant public opposition to the proposals and urged the site to be removed from the Plan. Councillor Chewings requested that a recorded vote be taken.

Councillor Simms referred to the importance of having appropriate plans in place to ensure that future housing developments would be built on the most suitable sites, and that the Borough needed to be protected.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Butler acknowledged that allocating sites was difficult but it was necessary to protect the Borough and retain control. Councillor Butler stated that if the Plan was not approved tonight to go onto the next stage, then the Borough's defences would be lost, with work having to start again, which would take years.

Councillor Upton echoed comments made by Councillor Calvert regarding partnership working, together with the importance of not missing this transitional window. He accepted that a significant part of the Plan related to housing delivery and referred to the ongoing housing crisis, with the new Government's housing targets calling for 1.5 million homes to be built in five years. Councillor Upton referred to the comments made about mass housing development and advised that the Plan did not propose any more strategic or major sites around the key settlements, there was a slight increase, which could be coped with. In respect of Tollerton Airport, that had been included in the 2014 Plan, when it was accepted by the Government Inspector, and it would be considered again. Councillor Upton stated that Rushcliffe had a good house building track record in the county, building more than any other authority, and of those, more were affordable, which was something to be

proud of.

In accordance with Standing Order Paragraph 4.23, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors M Barney, J Billin, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler, and G Williams

AGAINST: Councillors T Birch and K Chewings

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) the Publication Draft Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan and Policies Map Changes document, in so far as they relate to Rushcliffe Borough be approved, and their publication for a six-week public representation period be agreed;
- b) it be agreed that, following the representation period, the Publication Draft Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan, the Policies Map Changes document, all supporting documents and all representations received be submitted for public examination; and
- c) the Director for Development and Economic Growth be granted delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to make any minor editing changes to the Publication Draft Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan and the Policies Map Changes document prior to their publication.

32 **Notices of Motion**

Councillor Parekh indicated an interest in this item and moved to sit in the public gallery. She took no part in the debate

- a) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Birch and seconded by Councillor Chewings.

Prior to presenting her motion, Councillor Birch informed the Mayor that he wished to make an alteration to the motion using Standing Order Paragraph 4.58. After outlining the alteration, consent was given by the Council and Councillor Birch proceeded to move the motion.

“Council resolves to:

- Write to Nottinghamshire County Council to express our dissatisfaction with the current quality of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision.
- Write to Nottinghamshire County Council to demand that they meet their legal obligations with regards to completing EHCPs (Education, Health

and Care Plans) within the statutory 20 week timeframe.

- Write to Nottinghamshire County Council to request that they measure the qualitative, as well as quantitative, aspects of their SEND provision.
- Write to both the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson MP, and the Minister for School Standards, Catherine McKinnell MP, to request more funding is allocated to SEND education.
- Request that Nottinghamshire County Council gather and properly consider a wider range of views from parent carers and SEND children than just those from the commissioned Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum.
- Request that Nottinghamshire County Council implements a customer service desk to give parents of SEND children a central point of contact.
- Request that Nottinghamshire County Council implements a Service Level Agreement between themselves and SEND parents, which guarantees that phone messages and emails will be responded to within two working days.
- Request that Nottinghamshire County Council provides the Oliver McGowan Learning Disability and Autism Training to all teaching staff at schools across the county, as is currently mandated by the NHS.
- Provide the Oliver McGowan Learning Disability and Autism Training to all Rushcliffe Borough Council staff and Councillors.

Rushcliffe Borough Council stands firmly in support of all children with SEND and their families. By adopting this motion, we call on Nottinghamshire County Council, and central government, to recognize the urgency of the situation and to take decisive action to enhance the quality and effectiveness of SEND provision.”

In moving the motion, Councillor Birch advised that the Rushcliffe Independents were launching a Nottinghamshire SEND Improvement Campaign, with a petition being launched asking the County Council to undertake a number of measures. Councillor Birch highlighted what SEND included, as well as how a child could receive support, including an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), and advised that there was a 20 weeks statutory time frame to receive a Plan once it had been requested. Currently the national average response rate was 50%; however, in 2022, the response rate at the County Council was 4.5%. Council was advised that a SEND Improvement Board had been set up by the County Council in 2023, following an Inspection by OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission, which had highlighted systemic failures. Despite the Board being set up, parents were still very concerned about the service and he felt that both residents and children deserved better.

Councillor Chewings seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor J Wheeler proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:

“Rushcliffe Borough Council resolves to:

- Write to Nottinghamshire County Council to request that they measure the qualitative, as well as quantitative, aspects of their SEND provision.

- Write to both the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson MP, and the Minister for School Standards, Catherine McKinnell MP, to request more funding is allocated to SEND education in Nottinghamshire.
- Request that Nottinghamshire County Council continue to gather and consider a wide range of views from parents, carers and SEND children.
- Welcome the creation of the dedicated SEND email inbox for parents, carers and children to contact NCC and share their views and asks for details of NCC's response procedures to be shared with borough councillors.
- Request that Nottinghamshire County Council continues to provide accredited Learning Disability and Autism Training to all teaching staff at schools across the county.
- Encourage RBC councillors to complete the NCC Autism Awareness Course that is available as a e-learning modules on the members intranet.
- Welcome the news that RBC staff have recently undertaken a training session on neuro divergency.

Rushcliffe Borough Council stands firmly in support of all children with SEND and their families. By adopting this motion, we support Nottinghamshire County Council, and central government, in recognizing the urgency of the situation and taking decisive action to enhance the quality and effectiveness of SEND provision.”

Councillor Barney seconded the amendment to the motion and reserved the right to speak.

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Wheeler confirmed the Council's support for this issue and referred to the increasing pressures on the service. He acknowledged that currently the County Council did not meet the target for completing EHCPs; however, this was a national issue and had to be addressed. The County Council had recognised that it needed to do more, with the establishment of the SEND Improvement Board, and the problem was recognised by the last Government, which had increased funding. He welcomed the measures taken by the County Council and confirmed that it had already written to the new Government; however, the response had lacked any commitment, and it was hoped that this would be reconsidered. Councillor Wheeler referred to the centralised system in place at the County Council to handle enquiries, and Council was reminded that it was more important to give a quality response, rather than trying to meet the two day deadline, and he confirmed that appropriate training was undertaken by all relevant parties.

Councillor Birch confirmed that he would accept the amendment and so this became the substantive motion.

Councillor Plant referred to this very important issue and felt that everyone would agree that those affected deserved the right to an appropriate education. Councillor Plant stated that she had supported many parents and carers in their continuous battle to get help. It was noted that whilst the

number of children with SEND has been increasing, funding had failed to keep pace and it was a Labour Manifesto commitment to address this crucial issue as those affected deserved better and she confirmed that the Labour Group would support this motion.

Councillor Butler stated that he was pleased that the amendment had been accepted and referred to his own experiences as a school governor and that more funding was required, as this was a challenging issue.

Councillor R Mallender appreciated the strength of feeling on this issue and confirmed that the Green Group would be supporting the motion.

Councillor Simms stated that he could relate and identify with SEND, having being diagnosed with dyslexia and he was aware that demand was outstripping supply. Whilst this was an important issue, it was a matter for the County Council, and he hoped in future that motions would relate to Borough Council issues.

Councillor Polenta agreed that funding for SEND was inadequate. She felt that for too long conversation around SEND had been limited to a single access approach, with marginalised groups being further disadvantaged and it was important that no one should be left behind.

Councillor Gowland referred to the desperation that many parents and carers felt and stated that both councils should try to do everything they could to help.

Councillor Barney referred to the significant frustration felt by those trying to get support, and everyone welcomed the efforts being made to improve this. Poor communication was a major concern, compounded by long waiting times, and he felt that the County Council currently offered excellent support, and he welcomed the wider training programmes for teachers. Due to underfunding the SEND system was currently falling short and addressing those challenges required a multi-faceted approach.

The Leader stated that whilst this issue affected local residents in Rushcliffe, SEND provision was provided by the County Council and it would have been more appropriate to approach them. The Leader agreed that this situation could not be allowed to continue and confirmed that Government had been lobbied about changing processes, and the County Council was reviewing service provision, hence the amendment to the motion.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Chewings stated that the motion was asking another body to do something for local residents and acknowledged the ongoing financial challenges, and he hoped that the funding promised by the new Government would come to fruition.

Councillor Birch stated that Councillors were the voice of people in the Borough, and he thought that the motion had been very educational and had highlighted the problems faced by parents and carers. He stated that parents wanted qualitative as well as quantitative measurements and

concluded by urging everyone to support this motion. Councillor Birch requested that a recorded vote be taken.

In accordance with Standing Order Paragraph 4.23, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, J Cottee, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, P Matthews, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Viridi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, G Wheeler, J Wheeler, and G Williams

The motion was carried.

Councillor Parekh returned to the meeting.

- b) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by the Leader, Councillor Clarke MBE and seconded by Councillor Brennan.

“This Council resolves to:

- Urge the Chancellor of the Exchequer to review the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and to ensure that compensatory payments are included in the October Budget to ensure that vulnerable pensioners particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty this winter.
- Also urge our local Rushcliffe MPs to lobby the Chancellor to introduce measures to help those pensioners in Rushcliffe in need of additional support this winter, especially those that fall just outside the pension credit threshold.
- Continue the existing successful Council-led local awareness campaign, and work with local partners and charities, to alert those pensioners in Rushcliffe potentially eligible for Pension Credit but who currently do not access it, to apply for their entitlement.
- Work with Nottinghamshire County Council to utilise the Household Support Fund to provide some financial relief to the Borough's most vulnerable pensioners.”

The Leader stated that he was shocked that the new Government had taken the decision to cut winter fuel payments, with many pensioners falling just outside the threshold of claiming Pension Credit. The Leader advised that James Naish MP had stated that it was the responsibility of the Borough and County Councils to support those pensioners. It was noted that members at the Labour Conference had voted to ask the Chancellor to reverse the decision. The Leader accepted that there were wealthy pensioners who did not need the allowance; however, many vulnerable pensioners would find themselves in hardship. The Government had said that pensioners would be compensated, with an increased pension in April, but that would be too late as energy bills continued to rise. The Leader concluded by advising that Rushcliffe Borough Council would do what it

could for the most vulnerable; however, that should not be a substitute for the loss of the allowance.

Councillor Brennan seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Chaplain stated that the Labour Group was disappointed that this decision had been taken; however, the Government was being forced to deal with the huge financial deficit left by the previous administration. Councillor Chaplain also felt that many people, not just pensioners had been forced to make the same decisions during previous winters. Budget plans were unknown, although the Chancellor had stated that all pensioners would be better off and she assured Council that James Naish MP was acting on behalf of pensioners. Councillor Chaplain stated that the Labour Group fully supported improving access to Pension Credit, as well as using the Housing Support Fund, and it was hoped that the Council would do more to alleviate fuel poverty for all its residents, and she advised that the Labour Group would abstain from voting as the measures called for were meaningless.

Councillor J Wheeler reiterated that if all eligible pensioners signed up for Pension Credit, it would cost the Government more money, and it had been identified in Nottinghamshire that over 147,000 pensioners would lose the winter fuel allowance. Council noted that the Housing Support Fund helped many people and funds had already been extended by the previous Government and this motion was being put forward to ask those who could to lobby on the Council's behalf.

Councillor R Mallender felt that the wealthy should be taxed more to ensure that this money was available to all pensioners and called for more insulation and retrofitting in homes.

Councillor Chewings stated that protecting the most vulnerable should be a priority and that cutting this payment, with very little notice, without offering compensation was dangerous, especially to the nearly 200,000 pensioners with high energy needs, and together with the loss of additional cost of living payments, this would see some pensioners £600 worse off. People who voted for the Government were now asking why the elderly were being targeted and it was hoped that this decision would be reviewed.

Councillor Combellack reminded Council that the loss of this allowance would add to the burden on the NHS.

Councillor Thomas proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:

This Council resolves to:

- Urge the Chancellor of the Exchequer to review the decision threshold to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and to ensure that compensatory payments are included in the October Budget to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are also protected from fuel poverty this winter.

- Also urge our local Rushcliffe MPs to lobby the Chancellor to introduce measures to help those pensioners in Rushcliffe in need of additional support this winter, especially those that fall just outside the pension credit threshold.
- Continue the existing successful Council-led local awareness campaign, and work with local partners and charities, to alert those pensioners in Rushcliffe potentially eligible for Pension Credit but who currently do not access it, to apply for their entitlement.
- Work with Nottinghamshire County Council to utilise the Household Support Fund to provide some financial relief to the Borough's most vulnerable pensioners.
- Consider allocating funding in Rushcliffe's next budget to provide a hardship fund to give council tax relief to households in fuel poverty, including pensioners who have lost the allowance.

Councillor Thomas stated that all were concerned about how this would affect vulnerable pensioners, and she felt that it should be the threshold that was reviewed, rather than the decision to stop it being a universal payment. Councillor Thomas felt that Rushcliffe should also consider doing something to help households suffering from fuel poverty.

The Mayor asked the Leader if he accepted the amendment and he confirmed that he would not.

Councillor Billin seconded the amendment and agreed that Rushcliffe should lobby the local MP to urge the Government to change the threshold, to ensure that the most vulnerable were protected.

The Leader stated that the amendment changed the thrust of the motion and given that the County Council provided a hardship fund, if Rushcliffe was to do the same, the Leader hoped that it would also be provided by the Government.

On being put to the vote, the amendment to the motion was lost.

The Mayor asked if anyone wished to speak on the motion.

Councillor Om reiterated concerns raised and stated that winter was a challenging time for pensioners and removing this lifeline would increase health issues and reduce the quality of life for many.

Councillor Polenta stated that providing this allowance was the right thing to do to ensure a fair society for all and means testing stigmatised people and took away their dignity.

Councillor G Wheeler noted that cutting the winter fuel allowance had not been mentioned before the Election, and although in 2017 the Conservative Government had considered it, there would have been a consultation before anything happened.

Councillor Birch stated that many pensioners in Rushcliffe would be severely impacted, and further distress had been caused, due to poor

communication and timing of the announcement so close to winter and he also questioned the existence of the £22billion black hole. He noted that the Government had acknowledged that no full Risk Assessment had been conducted and he confirmed that he would be supporting the motion.

It was proposed by Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Brennan and **RESOLVED** by Councillors that the meeting be extended and would finish no later than 10.30pm.

Councillor Phillips stated that the elderly needed to heat their homes more, it was known that this cut would lead to unnecessary deaths, and pensioners deserved better.

It was proposed by Councillor R Mallender and seconded by Councillor S Mallender and **RESOLVED** that Council should move to the vote.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Brennan stated that she was sure that the Labour Group found this policy as reprehensible as everyone else and she reiterated that if eligible pensioners claimed Pension Credit then no savings would be made. Councillor Brennan stated that the Council would do what it could to help but thought it was wrong that Council Tax payers should be asked to pay more to subsidise winter fuel payments.

The Leader stated that Rushcliffe was one of many councils putting forward similar motions, which he hoped would have considerable influence and he called on James Naish MP to lobby for the payments to be retained. He advised that Rushcliffe was already providing support by having the lowest Council Tax in the county.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

- c) The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Upton and seconded by Councillor R Walker.

This Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to request:

1. that the housing target for Rushcliffe is not increased in recognition of the number of houses we have already built and already plan to build; and
2. that under the Duty to Co-operate, Nottingham City Council is urged to allocate our increase in housing numbers, as we did for them in 2014.

Councillor Upton stated that Rushcliffe had already built its fair share of housing and would continue to do so and the motion was asking that Rushcliffe should not be allocated anymore, and if any additional housing was required, the City of Nottingham should be asked to take it, as Rushcliffe had done in 2014.

Councillor R Walker seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Calvert was concerned that if the motion was accepted, it could delay progress of the GNSP, and he assured Council that the Labour Group also cared but it was also important that local residents could access affordable housing. Councillor Calvert was concerned that by writing to the Secretary of State, this could negatively impact on partnership working.

Councillor Chewings referred to this important issue and stated that the Rushcliffe Independents would be supporting the motion.

Councillor Thomas was very disappointed that the motion had been brought forward and felt that it was Councillor Upton's responsibility as the Portfolio Holder to send a message to the Government and to address this issue in an appropriate, considered manner at JPAB.

Councillor Parekh felt that Rushcliffe had already made a significant contribution and would continue to do so, and increasing the target would fail to recognise the proactive steps already being taken and could also impact on existing residents' quality of life. Councillor Parekh stated that building should be kept at a suitable level to align with local needs.

Councillor Grocock advised that people living in the countryside were not opposed to new housing, it just needed to be suitable and reasonably priced, and if demand kept increasing, then appropriate housing, with the right infrastructure needed to be built.

The Leader stated that in 2014, Rushcliffe was given what it considered to be a reasonable allocation of 6,000 houses, as part of the duty to cooperate with Nottingham City Council, which was over and above the nearly 4,000 houses, which was the housing need for the Borough; however, the Inspector then asked the Borough to find a further 3,500 houses. Given that the City Council now had brownfield sites that it could develop, the Leader felt that Rushcliffe should not be asked to build any additional homes.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor R Walker stated that this was an opportunity for the City to address significant issues related to population growth and the relative lack of housing delivery, when compared to other major cities, and such increases should be welcomed by the City to act as a catalyst to increase prosperity.

Councillor Upton agreed that smaller villages and rural communities needed some small developments to provide affordable housing for young people and Rushcliffe had a history of infill and garden developments.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

33 Questions from Councillors

a) Question from Councillor Grocock to Councillor Upton

“Considering the findings of the Environment Agency's Adaptive

Investment for Growth July 2023 prospectus, presented to Growth and Development Scrutiny Committee on 6th March 2024, has there been any analysis of the factors behind Rushcliffe's low score for some of the report's Environmental Inequality Themes, particularly "Plants and Wildlife" for which Rushcliffe is ranked 295, the worst of all councils across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire?"

Councillor Inglis summarised what the document covered and advised that it ranked Rushcliffe third for overall environmental quality across the county; however, the Council was very aware of the findings, which were based on historical data and had been discussed with the Environment Agency. Rushcliffe comprised largely of good to very good agricultural land, which had been intensively farmed, resulting in ecologically poor land and lower levels of biodiversity compared to other areas. However, the Council had a strong track record in encouraging wider biodiversity across the Borough and advised that Rushcliffe scored 219 for its air quality.

The Mayor asked Councillor Grocock if he had a supplementary question.

"Can the Council commit to developing a strategy with associated actual objectives to address our low score on plants and wildlife and other themes where we ranked relatively poorly with the report?"

Councillor Inglis advised that the Council could.

b) Question from Councillor Way to Councillor J Wheeler

"Residents of estates that have 'open space' management fees are raising concerns about the possible consequences of the current play park survey. How will the Council reassure these residents that any outcomes from the survey will not result in obligatory changes to the facilities on their estates resulting in subsequent increases in their management fees?"

Councillor J Wheeler advised that the survey related to future play parks rather than current ones.

The Mayor asked Councillor Way if she had a supplementary question.

"Apart from financial considerations, what barriers are there preventing Borough or parish councils adopting these play areas?"

Councillor Wheeler advised that the Leader had taken the issue of management of open spaces up with Government ministers and currently, apart from the parks it had responsibility for, the Council had no legal ability to take on any others.

c) Question from Councillor Plant to the Leader, Councillor Clarke MBE

"At the recent Corporate Overview Group the Quarter 1 position for 2024/5 was reported on. There is a predicted net revenue efficiency of £1.106M for 2024/5. £500,000 of the projected underspend is to be put into a new "West Bridgford town centre reserve" towards the pedestrianisation of

WBTC i.e. Central Avenue. Can the Leader of the Council tell me has the decision to pedestrianise Central Avenue been made?”

The Leader advised that this was a complex issue, involving many partners and stakeholders, who would need to be involved, together with public consultation, and although pedestrianisation was not directly within the Borough’s gift, the overarching desire was to ensure the economic prosperity of that area, and the consultation would show if it was wanted.

The Mayor asked Councillor Plant if she had a supplementary question.

“Will residents, businesses and local West Bridgford Councillors be consulted on this important issue before a decision was actually made?”

The Leader stated that as it was a public consultation then anyone could comment.

The meeting closed at 10.25 pm.

CHAIR