

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW GROUP
TUESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2025**

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 (Chair), A Edyvean, L Plant, D Polenta, L Way and
G Williams

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

P Linfield

Director of Finance and Corporate
Services

D Banks

Director of Neighbourhoods

E Palmer

Communications and Customer
Services Manager

K Brennan

Finance Business Partner

T Coop

Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors P Matthews

27 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

28 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were agreed as an
accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

29 White Ribbon Action Plan

The Director – Neighbourhoods presented the Council's White Ribbon Action
Plan to seek re-accreditation as an employer, to become a White Ribbon UK
organisation.

The Group were reminded that at the Full Council meeting on 7 March 2024, a
motion was proposed by Councillor Calvert that the Council would seek re-
accreditation as a White Ribbon UK organisation and that progress on the
implementation of an Action Plan would be reported to the Corporate Overview
Group.

The Director – Neighbourhoods advised the Group that since the motion was

passed, a number of actions have been made, including:

- Establishment of a new White Ribbon Steering Group
- Completion and submission of the White Ribbon Accreditation Application
- Developed and submitted a 3-year White Ribbon action plan, which has been approved by the Accreditation Panel
- Communicated internally and externally the Council's commitment
- Raised awareness and signed up ambassadors and champions
- Provided training for Councillors through Broxtowe Women's Group
- Promotion of the 'It Starts with Men' campaign and White Ribbon Day

The Group were informed that the Steering Group is chaired by the Director – Neighbourhoods with the Strategic HR Manager taking on the White ribbon Lead Contact role for accreditation and facilitating the work of the group, which also includes key officers from across the Council.

The Group were asked to note the delivery of the Action Plan which shows the progression over the next three years, focusing on training, development of policies, collaboration with key partners and commitment to engage through national campaigns.

The next steps include:

- Specific training for staff on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
- Ensuring contractors used by the Council are aware of our commitment and expectations on VAWG
- Develop a Communication Plan for internal and external communications
- Ensure new starters are made aware of our White Ribbon accreditation within the induction process
- Encouraging local sports clubs to consider accreditation

The Director – Neighbourhoods in summarising explained that in terms of the Nottinghamshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and its associated action plan, Rushcliffe Borough Council has supported the strategy in a number of ways and have captured these actions within its own White Ribbon Action Plan. These include:

- Delivery of Safer Streets CCTV Camera systems in West Bridgford and Bingham
- Attended a strategy relaunch event hosted by the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Domestic Abuse training for Councillors – hosted by Broxtowe Women's Group
- Officer attendance at the Nottinghamshire Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
- Officer Participation in the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
- Support for any Domestic Homicide Reviews along with implementation of learning across South Notts Community Partnership.

The Chair suggested promoting the campaign through the various Council owned community facilities such as Gresham, West Park and our leisure

centres. The Director – Neighbourhoods confirmed this will be a key element of the action plan, adding that the Sports and Development Officer is to action this stream of work and promote the campaign and awareness through the various sports clubs using Council venues.

Councillor Way had attended the training hosted by Broxtowe Women's Group and informed the Corporate Overview Group how excellent the training had been and how surprised and shocked she was at the statistics of physical abuse. She also added that abusers are not always men and felt the campaign 'It Starts with Men' and any future training needed to be broadened to include more diverse relationships.

Councillor Polenta raised a number of points around sub-contractors and whether the Council could insist that contractors are accredited, she asked what support was in place for employees and whether funding support available for staff and residents who fall victims to abuse. The Director – Neighbourhoods explained that the Council cannot insist a contractor is White Ribbon Accredited, but we can ensure they are aware that we foster this approach across all Council departments. With regards to staff support this is championed through the Councils Workplace Health function, which is headed up by the HR leadership team. With regards to support and funding for residents this would be managed by the Strategic Housing team and County Council, adding that Rushcliffe does operate a refuge for emergency housing at Hound Road, West Bridgford.

Councillor Williams highlighted the J9 Safer Places initiative that Bingham Town Council are encouraging local businesses and sports venues/clubs to sign up to and be made aware of.

The Chairman also highlighted the 'Ask Angela' scheme that helps support anyone feeling vulnerable on a night out to get the support they need and whether this scheme and the J9 scheme could be tied in to support the White Ribbon accreditation. The Director – Neighbourhoods explained that officers recognise that each of these organisations have their own independent campaigns within the voluntary sector and that it would be difficult for the Council to intervene and shape them as they have their own agendas. The Director – Neighbourhoods emphasised that the Council is not looking to replace any of these alternative organisations, but hopes to provide leadership across the Borough with the White Ribbon accreditation.

Councillor Plant thanked officers for the work being done and asked if data on incidents could be shared with the Group. Councillor Plant also asked what was being done to keep the message live and active in the public domain. The Communications and Customer Services Manager advised that there had been a campaign across the festive period at all the Council's customer services points with more campaigns to be delivered across the Council's social media platforms in line with the action plan. The Director – Neighbourhoods advised that there is ongoing conversations and staff training with colleagues at Streetwise and the campaign ambassadors and champions are undertaking training to assist with the campaign's promotion, adding that Councillor Inglis was the ambassador to promote the campaign for elected members.

The Group provided a number of suggestions for promoting the campaign, such as ambassadors attending and promoting the campaign at the Council's events, using the media screens in the offices and across the Council's contact points and leisure centres.

The Group were advised that the White Ribbon website had lots of information and support for anyone wanting to join the campaign and seek accreditation.

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

- a) Noted the progress made since the motion was passed, including confirmation of re-accreditation as a White Ribbon UK organisation
- b) Recognised the actions taken to date as listed in sections 4.2 and 4.7 of the report
- c) Noted the forthcoming actions as listed in section 4.6 of the report.

30 Financial and Performance Management

Financial Update

The Finance Business Partner presented the Council's quarter three financial position for 2024/25.

The Finance Business Partner informed the Group that at quarter three there is a predicted a net revenue efficiency of £2.164m, with significant variances highlighted in table 1 of the report. This represented a variance of 14.23% against a budgeted Net Service Expenditure and is proposed to be earmarked for any additional cost pressures and financial challenges, such as Simpler Recycling and Local Government Reorganisation.

The Finance Business Partner reported that there was a capital budget underspend projection of £4.4m, which includes rephasing of £0.556m to 2025/26 budget and other variations including £1.5m Land Acquisition whilst the Council continues to explore opportunities for suitable land for carbon offsetting.

The Group were advised that the overall budget variance is expected to be an efficiency of around £2.164m with proposals to earmark the in-year efficiencies for specific reserves as detailed at Appendix A of the report. At table 1 within the report the Group were provided with a summary of the main pressures and efficiencies with a further full summary of all significant variances at Appendix B of the report. At table 2 in the report, the Group were provided with the expected use of the projected underspend, including IT contracts and Treasury Capital Depreciation Reserves. The Group also noted the Organisation Stabilisation Reserve which highlights the uncertainty of Local government Reorganisation.

In concluding, the Finance Business Partner advised that the current projected overall variance does mean that any borrowing requirement can be met from internal resources with no need to borrow externally for this financial year.

Performance Monitoring

The Communications and Customer Services Manager presented the third report of the new Corporate Strategy 2024-27 and the performance monitored by each theme. A full corporate scorecard was provided at Appendix F attached to the report.

With regards to the **Environment**, the Group were advised of seven performance indicators, two of which had not met their target as follows:

Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting

– It was noted that there had been a considerable drop in garden waste tonnage collected, which has an adverse effect. However, overall recycling rates from both the grey and blue bins are consistent year on year.

Percentage recycling contamination rate – this has arisen from changes made to how contamination is measured by Veolia and this is being investigated by officers.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager advised the Group that further educational campaigns via the Council's social media platforms are planned to address some of these issues.

With regards to **Quality of Life** the Group were advised of 11 performance indicators, with one indicator not meeting its target as follows:

Percentage usage of community facilities – the usage for quarter three is 32.3% against a usage target of 50% - whilst the percentage usage of community facilities has not met its target this has been offset by the significant usage increase at the Council's pitches, primarily at Gresham Sports Park.

The Communications and Customer Services Manager informed the Group that officers were working hard on two projects to increase usage. The first being a complete refurbishment of the Sir Julien Cahn Pavilion at West Park and secondly the full replacement of the AV equipment at Rushcliffe Arena to reduce IT related issues and improve the productivity of the system for external bookings and income.

With regards to **Sustainable Growth** the Group were advised of 11 performance indicators all meeting their current targets.

With regards to **Efficient Services** the Group were advised of 25 performance indicators, with six exceptions not meeting their targets as follows:

Number of cremations held at Rushcliffe Oaks – Cremation numbers were reprofiled across the year reflecting the trend as seen in year one. However, feedback from funeral directors is that funeral services are quiet across the board, and this will be taken into consideration when profiling for 2005/26. The

Communications and Customer Services Manager added that the facility and team continue to receive positive feedback, and the facility is seeing significant growth in numbers.

Income from all activities at Rushcliffe Oaks – Income projections are based on cremation numbers and the projection for year-end has been reduced. However, if numbers exceed this target in the remaining months the Council will see growth in income.

Average number of days to process a change in circumstances to a housing benefit claim – this was reported to be a small anomaly

Percentage of Councillors completing e-learning mandatory e-learning modules this municipal year – it was reported that there had been no e-learning modules completed since November. Councillors are required to complete modules during their 4 year term and early completion is encouraged.

Percentage increase in digital transactions – the Communications and Customer Services Manager advised that there is a constant variation from month to month. However, increases were shown from e-form completion, payments via the website and logins to the benefits/Revenues system and pitch bookings remained constant. Growth in this area will largely be delivered by increasing the number of transactions that can be completed online.

Income generated from community buildings – It was reported that officers were in the process of transferring bookings for the Sir Julien Cahn Pavilion to the Council's other community buildings in preparation for the pavilion refurbishment which has led to some loss of bookings. The Communications and Customer Services Manager advised that marketing of all the Council's community venues continues.

Councillor Edyvean commented on the decline in community facility usage and asked if this was a result of the Covid pandemic and users not returning. He also commented on the refurbishment of the Sir Julien Cahn Pavilion and asked what could be done to promote this facility and attract new users once the work is completed. In addition, the Chairman asked whether the decline in community facility usage was typical of the rest of the county. The Communications and Customer Services Manager advised that there had been a national shift in user behaviour and habits and also a generational change, with opportunities to reach out to new audiences. With regards to the Sir Julien Cahn Pavilion the Communications and Customer Services Manager expressed that there were no real concerns and that once the refurbishment is completed the facility offer will be greatly improved including greener energy and enhanced IT technology which will provide greater opportunities for promoting the facility.

Councillor Williams expressed the need for improvements to the Council's community facilities and asked a specific question in relation to Alford Road playing fields and whether the issues around drainage and flooding had affected pitch bookings here. The Communications and Customer Services Manager advised that there is increased capacity at Gresham to compensate for the loss of bookings at Alford Road, adding that the grass pitches were

being used less during wetter months and users are seeking to use all weather pitches as a preference to grass.

Councillor Plant asked a specific question relating to Rushcliffe Oaks not hitting its target of cremations and whether Wilford Hill crematorium was still the preferred choice for residents. The Communications and Customer Services Manager explained that Wilford Hill has decades of experience to its advantage, however the team at Rushcliffe Oaks were working hard on building relationships with funeral directors and looking at different options and opportunities to raise their profile.

Councillor Plant commented on the Council's aspirations to improve and build on the tourism economy, expressing that good signage would provide greater opportunities for the Borough's parks, churches, leisure centres and other places of interest. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services advised that officers were developing a Tourism Strategy to progress this line of work.

The Chairman commented on Councillor e-learning training which she stated had been raised and discussed at the last Member Development Group and expressed her preference for face-to-face training, particularly around mandatory topics such as, planning, licensing and GDPR. In addition, the Chairman suggested that the learning process for Councillors be scrutinised. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services advised that the current training programme for Councillors runs from 2021-25 and that it would be appropriate to revisit the process at some point later in the year. It was noted that Member Development Group would be the appropriate committee to approve the training for sign off by a meeting of Full Council. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services added that third party training by external trainers can be costly and is not necessarily well attended and that a balanced mix of face-to-face and e-learning is appropriate when also taking into account resource implications.

Councillor Plant asked a specific question around sustainable growth and the Ratcliffe on Soar power station site and whether there was any movement on what was being developed at the site. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services advised that a periodical update report is expected to be presented at the Cabinet meeting in May.

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

- a) The expected revenue budget efficiency for the year of £2.164m and the proposals to earmark this for cost pressures provided at paragraph 4.5 and Table 2
- b) The projected capital budget efficiencies of £4.440m including the reprofiling of provisions totalling £0.556m (paragraph 4.8 and Table 3)
- c) The overspend of £46.3k on special expenses (paragraph 4.6)
- d) The exceptions on performance to judge whether further information is required

31 Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen

The Chair of Governance Scrutiny Group reported that at the Groups last meeting held on 20 February 2025 they had received reports relating to the Council's Internal Audit, Risk Management, Capital and Investment updates and amendments to the Council's Constitution. The Chair of Governance Scrutiny Group advised that the reports remained positive, and the Council was in a good financial position. In addition, the Chair highlighted that the Council's property portfolio and occupancy rates were at 100% which is an excellent achievement in the current financial climate.

With regards to the amendments to the Constitution the Chair reported that there had been much debate around recorded votes and tightening up on Motions. The Group had recommended that any amendments to the Constitution should be reported and discussed by Full Council.

The Chair of Communities Scrutiny Group reported that at the Groups last meeting held on 23 January 2025 the Group received a report on the Residents Survey. The Chair advised that there had been discussions on the challenges around encouraging and improving a greater response to the survey from residents, which had been poor. The Chair also advised that the Group had suggested specific targeting for example options to provide feedback at some of the Council's community events. It was also suggested that the survey questions are better defined to provide a clearer understanding of the expectations of residents in both urban and rural communities.

The Vice Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group reported that at the Groups last meeting on 29 January 2025 the Group received a report on the Health of the Boroughs Town and Village Centres. The Vice Chair advised that the high street data that had been provided from a review in 2023 was out of date and the Group recommended that scope be considered for the information to be updated. The Group were asked to consider the Council's Economic Growth Strategy, including a feasibility study and public consultation for the pedestrianisation of Central Avenue and a Borough wide Tourism Brochure.

In addition, the Vice Chair of Growth and Development Scrutiny Group reported that the Group raised concerns with regard to recent bank closures and the lack of provision of banking services in the key settlements and requested an additional recommendation for the Council to prioritise the closure of banks and to research opportunities for mobile banking services/banking hubs.

The Chair commented on the scrutiny process being 'a political' and a functional process and that discussion should not stray into personal Political areas, adding that Councillors need to be reminded to stick to the agenda item and that scrutiny is not the appropriate forum for political debate.

32 Feedback from Lead Officers

The Director for Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that there were no updates from Lead Officers.

33 **Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes**

The Chairman confirmed that one scrutiny item had been submitted by Councillor R Upton with a proposed topic for the Communities Scrutiny Group to undertake a scrutiny review of the performance of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing, regarding their housing services within the Borough, focusing on repairs and maintenance service delivery.

The Group were pleased to see this topic come forward expressing that it had been a while since the performance of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing had been scrutinised and that the organisation had grown considerably over the years and how the pressures on social housing services and maintenance had also increased. Councillor Polenta highlighted the rights for tenants to access quality housing and strengthening the timescales for providers to complete maintenance and repairs on their properties and suggested the Council be more proactive in respect of enforcement where social landlords fail to deliver on maintenance and repairs.

The Group approved that the performance of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing be added to the Communities Scrutiny Group Work Programme at its meeting in July 2025.

The Group noted the summary of scrutiny items taken forward over a one-year period, including items that did not meet the criteria for further scrutiny. The Chairman expressed this had been useful to see a timeline of what had been scrutinised.

The Director – Finance and Corporate Services advised that Councillor Gaunt had commented on the submission of future scrutiny requests and whether provision for additional scrutiny training could be considered. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services suggested Councillors could engage more in the scrutiny process by looking at the Council's Corporate Strategies and action plans or consider any performance issues that may require a scrutiny review, such as external providers and contracts.

Councillor Way asked a specific question relating to scrutiny requests that had not been taken forward for scrutiny and asked when the scrutiny process is likely to be reviewed, which is expected to be sometime in 2025 and whether Councillors will be given the opportunity to be involved in the review process. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services advised that the Group would be provided with an update on the Scrutiny Review at its next meeting in July.

The Chairman suggested a scrutiny review of the Council's role within flood alleviation and the pressures on outside agencies around the recent increase in flooding incidents. This was supported by Councillor Edyvean.

Councillor Edyvean suggested that Council Tax on Empty Homes and Second Homes be reviewed at some stage in the future.

The Director – Finance and Corporate Services asked the Group to encourage fellow Councillors to submit items for scrutiny that they feel may help the

Council to improve the services it provides to residents.
It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporate Overview Group:

- a) Considered the additional items for scrutiny from the current Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Finance Strategy, Capital and Investment Strategy and Transformation and Efficiency Programme/Productivity Plan (Appendix one)
- b) Determined the additional topic to be included in the Communities Scrutiny Group Work Programme for 2025/26 as presented on the newly submitted scrutiny request (Appendix Two)
- c) Reviewed the current work programme of the scrutiny groups (Appendix Three)
- d) Reviewed appendix Four, which summarised the wide range of scrutiny items taken forward over a one-year period and the items that were considered but did not meet the criteria for further scrutiny.

Work Programme 2024/25 – Corporate Overview Group

X June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversity Annual Report and Update on the Equality and Diversity Strategy ○ Annual Update on Strategic Tasks
X September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feedback from Scrutiny Group Chairmen ○ Feedback from Lead Officer ○ Consideration of Scrutiny Group Work Programmes ○ Financial and Performance Management • Rolling Items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and Safety Annual Report

Work Programme 2024/25 – Governance Scrutiny Group

X May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report • Internal Audit Annual Report • Annual Fraud Report • Annual Governance Statement (AGS) • Capital and Investment Outturn • Constitution Update • Code of Conduct
X September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit Progress Report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital and Investment Strategy Update • Going Concern • Risk Management Update
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Work Programme 2024/25 Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

26 March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Open Spaces on New Housing Developments
X July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
X October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Work Programme 2024/25 – Communities Scrutiny Group

3 April 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon Management Plan
X July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance of Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
X October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

OFFICER ACTIONS – 25 February 2025

Minute No.	Action	Officer Responsible
29	Members asked for statistics/data on domestic violence incidents could be shared with the Group	Director Neighbourhoods has provided this information to the Group
29	Members requested a list of staff/Councillor Ambassadors and Champions	Director – Neighbourhoods has provided this information to the Group
30	Councillor Way asked for an update on the improvements for East Leake Leisure Centre	Director – Neighbourhoods has provided this information to East Leake Ward Councillors
33	With regard to the last Peer Review Councillor Way asked when the Council's scrutiny process would be reviewed	Head of Corporate Services will provide an update at the next meeting in June

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

CHAIR