

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 6 MARCH 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 A Brown (Chair), M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, 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
A Hill	Chief Executive
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
S Pregon	Monitoring Officer
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager
S Whittaker	Head of Finance

APOLOGIES:

Councillors J Cottee, P Gowland, P Matthews and D Simms

48 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

49 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 5 December 2024 were approved as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

50 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor welcomed Adam Hill as the new Chief Executive and informed Council that he had attended 20 events since the last meeting, including many Christmas events, and he thanked Councillors for attending his Carol Service. He had enjoyed visiting staff and helping to serve Christmas dinner at the Friary on Christmas Day. The Mayor referred to his visit to Rainbows Hospice with Councillor Brennan, where they presented a cheque for £11,600, which had been collected by Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium, with the kind permission

of relatives from the proceeds of recycling metal. He concluded by thanking Kerie Mooney for her successful skydive in aid of his charity last weekend.

51 Leader's Announcements

The Leader also welcomed Adam Hill and confirmed that discussions on Local Government Reorganisation continued, with an Extraordinary Council meeting scheduled for 20 March 2025 to consider an interim list of proposals, with work then continuing to produce the main submission by the end of November 2025.

52 Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive thanked everyone for the warm welcome he had received and stated that he was looking forward to working with Councillors going forward.

53 Citizens' Questions

The Mayor invited Mr Bear to read his question as submitted:

“Please will the Council review their decision to reduce the period from two years to one year before empty properties become assessable to double Council Tax from 1 April 2024, and exclude properties which have been or are genuinely being marketed for sale or are being repaired following, for example fire or flood?”

Councillor Virdi thanked Mr Bear for his question and advised that in November 2024 a new statutory instrument was approved, which would be active from 1 April 2025, updating previous legislation and the policy approved by Full Council last year. The updated legislation related to exceptions when the premium should only be applied after 12 months, which included actively marketing a property for sale or let, following probate, or if a property was deemed uninhabitable. In the case of a property being uninhabitable, it was feasible a property that had a severe fire or flood could have the exception applied. Furthermore, if properties were severely damaged, an individual could ask the Valuation Office to remove the property from Council Tax, and Councillor Virdi advised that this avenue had been available before 1 April 2024. Regarding properties for sale, the Government had introduced the exception for 12 months, which was considered reasonable to sell properties, and the premium applied thereafter. This was effectively the same policy the Council had in place from 1 April 2024, was consistent with current Government legislation and perfectly reasonable. The legislation was one of the ways that the Council could encourage properties to be occupied rather than empty, and this was endorsed by the Communities Scrutiny Group on 20 July 2023. Councillor Virdi confirmed that for the reasons stated, the Council would not be increasing the period to apply the empty homes premium from one year to two years from 1 April 2024.

54 Petitions

No petitions were presented at this meeting.

55 **Business form last Council meeting**

Question from Councillor Gaunt to Councillor Combellack.

“Please can I find out the total number of scrutiny matrices that were submitted by Councillors in the past 12 months for the consideration of the scrutiny panel, versus the number of scrutiny matrices that actually made it to the Corporate Overview Group meetings for consideration?”

Councillor Combellack advised that a full breakdown of requests was provided to the Corporate Overview Group last week and this question could have been avoided being asked. Councillor Combellack confirmed that 17 requests were made, of which six were taken forward, seven rejected by the Group and four responded to separately, having either been considered previously, or not requiring full scrutiny, by being addressed by another forum. She stated that one of her requests had not been accepted, if any proof was needed regarding the objectivity of the process.

Councillor Gaunt asked a supplementary question to Councillor Combellack.

“Could training be provided on how to fill in the paperwork correctly to ensure that the criteria is met?”....

Councillor Combellack stated that the breakdown of requests and actions was a matter of record and she and officers would be happy to discuss the matter further, and Councillors could request to attend Corporate Overview Group.

56 **2025/26 Budget and Financial Strategy**

The Mayor advised that it was proposed that the speaking times be extended to permit the mover of the report 15 minutes to speak on the matter, and to allow 7 ½ minutes for the seconder and other Group Leaders and this was agreed by Council.

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke MBE presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services outlining the Council’s Budget and Financial Strategy for 2025/26.

The Leader stated that all councils continued to face financial pressures; however, Rushcliffe continued improving its services, with a virtually balanced budget over five years, including up to date, signed off Financial Statements, with excellent governance, which was the backbone of any well run local authority. The Leader referred to the hard work undertaken to produce the budget, ensuring that the Council had a commercial culture, generated financial efficiencies and was forward looking. Council noted that Government funding this year was much lower, with Core Spending Power only increasing by 0.9% compared to 6.8% nationally, and with inflation running at 2%, this was a cut in overall funding, resulting in the Council having to raise revenue to fund services. The Leader expressed pride that Rushcliffe continued to have the lowest Council Tax in Nottinghamshire and remained amongst the lowest 25% in the country and felt that the Special Expenses precept for West

Bridgford, compared to other areas remained excellent value.

The Leader referred to the Council's Transformation and Efficiency Plan, which would deliver £1.7m over five years and whilst acknowledging some charges were increasing, he felt that they remained competitive. The Capital Programme remained substantial with £27.1m budgeted over five years, including a continued range of investments across the Borough as detailed in Section 9.2 of the Capital Programme, and he confirmed that reserves remained sound.

The Leader referred to the Commentary of the S151 Officer, which confirmed that the Council was not at risk of requiring exceptional financial support. The Leader advised that going forward significant challenges lay ahead, including Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), together with the impending comprehensive review on local government finances, and uncertainty regarding various Government grants. The Leader confirmed that Rushcliffe was in a relatively healthy financial position compared to many other councils and continued to provide excellent value for money to its residents. The Leader concluded by thanking Councillors, in particular Councillor Viridi and the Director – Finance and Corporate Services and the Finance Team for their continued hard work during such challenging times.

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

Councillor J Walker thanked officers for their continued support and stated that being a successful council was more than just having a balanced budget, it was an opportunity to act with confidence to future proof the organisation. As demands for funding increased, she was concerned that with the Council now looking to identify major assets for disposal, they could be lost to future generations. Councillor Walker stated that the Council needed to re-engage with the principles behind the budget, allowing residents to understand the necessity of taxation, whilst focusing on those dependant on the Council's intervention. She referred to the importance of thinking strategically and questioned if making saving on the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) now was prudent. Councillor Walker referred to the importance of maintaining trust with residents, which could only be achieved with transparency and honesty.

She referred to the proposed amendment to increase the DFG budget, and reiterated concerns made last year regarding Rushcliffe's unwillingness to consider having Council owned social housing. Councillor Walker referred to the LGR and stated that if district councils disappeared, West Bridgford would be left without any representation and the second proposed amendment to have a Community Governance Review (CGR) would bring the issue into the public forum and offer a solution.

Councillor Gaunt seconded the amended recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Thomas thanked officers, stated that the Group fully supported the first proposed amendment and felt that despite the lack of Government funding, Rushcliffe was affluent enough to afford this, and she also agreed that it was time for West Bridgford to have its own Town Council. Councillor Thomas

referred to the allocation of £70k for 'Welcome to Rushcliffe' signs and whilst she supported promoting the Borough, she questioned if this was good value for money and suggested that the money be reallocated.

Councillor R Mallender also supported the proposed amendments and agreed that whilst West Bridgford had a Local Area Forum, it was not a Town Council, and given the uncertainties surrounding LGR it was important to consult local residents through a CGR.

Councillor Birch thanked officers and stated that he could see no coherent ideology underpinning this budget, as it was raising taxes, draining reserves, increasing garden waste collection fees, and car parking, which would impact businesses, and he noted that there was no money budgeted for a new car park in Bingham. Councillor Birch referred to Council Tax and clarified that Rushcliffe's element amounted to 6%, and if the rest of the Council Tax was factored in, Rushcliffe was in the top 5% in the UK and the highest in Nottinghamshire. Councillor Birch stated that Rushcliffe was an affluent Borough, which brought great advantages, including a large tax base with lower overheads. Councillor Birch stated that he supported the amendment and agreed that it was important for West Bridgford to have its own Town Council.

In supporting the proposed budget, Councillor J Wheeler reiterated that Rushcliffe's Council Tax was the lowest in the county, despite reductions in Government funding and Rushcliffe was still investing over £27m in services, whilst remaining debt free. Councillor Wheeler confirmed that businesses continued to be supported, with car parking prices balanced to encourage turnover, and he also welcomed the investment in leisure. He felt that having a CGR would not be cost effective for local residents and that the current arrangement should remain, especially whilst LGR was being considered.

Councillor Upton referred to DFG and confirmed that the Council had a good track record of providing grants, although demand was currently outstripping the grant, with Rushcliffe receiving less money than any other district. Councillor Upton referred to the response to his letter from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government confirming that the Government was keeping DFG funding under review. It was noted that Rushcliffe had allocated an additional £700k over the last three years; however, a change to the Government grant formula was required. Councillor Upton confirmed that more Government funding had recently been allocated, and that districts would 'pool' and redistribute uncommitted DFG funds. He stated that rather than supporting the proposed amendment, the Council's focus should be on getting more Government funding and he also felt that it was too risky for the Council to rebuild its own housing stock.

Councillor Polenta stated that the budget should reflect community values and was a moral statement, with the proposed amendment fulfilling the principle that public services must meet public needs, with accessibility as a right. Many disabled residents struggled to stay in their own homes, being unable to pay for adaptations and she felt that all new developments should be made accessible from the outset. Councillor Polenta supported a CGR as West Bridgford's residents deserved a direct say, and a Town Council would strengthen local

democracy and she felt that overall, Council's should engage more when setting budgets.

Councillor Grocock reminded Council that accessible housing had been discussed by a joint meeting of the Communities and Growth and Development Scrutiny Groups last October, when it had been agreed to ask other councils to redistribute any unspent funds. Councillor Grocock felt that the Council needed to be more ambitious, including making savings from elsewhere, and not doing so was a political choice, which disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable. Councillor Grocock felt that it would be better for the Council to build its own housing stock and that a Feasibility Study should be undertaken to look at the information considered by the two scrutiny groups.

Councillor Calvert supported a CGR as it was appropriate for residents to have a say in local issues, through a decision making body. He felt that current Borough Council consultation was sporadic, there was limited local consultation on the Special Expenses precept and given LGR, this issue needed to be looked at urgently.

Councillor Chaplain also questioned the effectiveness of the Council's consultation process, specifically regarding the pedestrianisation of Central Avenue and that it would be appropriate to consult residents now, to explain what LGR would involve. Councillor Chaplain referred to the benefits gained by the Council in holding large amounts of S106 and CIL monies, questioned why funds available for affordable housing and in the Climate Change Reserve had not been used, and that by holding onto developer contributions, the Council was remaining debt free by failing to provide vital infrastructure.

Councillor S Mallender thanked officers and stated that it was better to raise Council Tax, to produce strong social benefits and help the most deserving. She agreed that it would be better for the Council to have its own housing stock and that West Bridgford should also have its own Town Council.

Councillor Brennan stated that the Council was doing a tremendous amount to support businesses through its first Economic Growth Strategy, which focused on attracting and supporting businesses, by encouraging investment and skills. The Strategy focused on tourism, and Councillor Brennan felt that more could be done to promote the Borough, as it was important to let people know where that they were, and to encourage them to support local businesses. She confirmed that considerable consultation had already taken place regarding pedestrianisation in West Bridgford, and any plans needed to be feasible before consulting with the public. Councillor Brennan stated that she was unaware of any of the Council's assets being disposed of, as investment continued and she was proud of this prudent budget, which continued to attract businesses.

Councillor R Walker advised that a CGR would be automatically triggered if a petition had sufficient signatures and suggested that this would be the best approach.

In supporting the budget, Councillor Parekh referred to the excellent facilities enjoyed by residents in West Bridgford and felt that a Town Council was

unnecessary as the current system worked well.

Councillor Way stated that people were currently suffering because their homes were not adapted and action was needed and she agreed that West Bridgford should have a Town Council, especially given the uncertainty surrounding LGR.

Councillor Chewings stated that the budget would burden residents without delivering real value by increasing taxes and raiding reserves. He stated that the financial outlook was grim, and rather than securing stability, this budget relied on uncertainty, with missed placed spending priorities and he questioned increasing car parking charges. He supported the proposed amendment to increase DFGs, hoped that Government funding would increase, but felt that vulnerable residents were trapped by the Council's decision not to restore discretionary DFG. Councillor Chewings also supported bringing local authority housing back under the Council's control but could not support spending money on a CGR and encouraged residents to push for a Town Council.

Councillor G Wheeler thanked officers, expressed concern that the two proposed amendments, if agreed would add to officers' workloads, reiterated that the Council was investing in its assets and that increasing West Bridgford's Special Expenses made no sense.

Councillor Om referred to the significant investment being undertaken throughout the Borough, whilst remaining debt free and supported the budget.

Councillor Plant thanked officers, expressed concern regarding proposed cuts, together with increased car parking fees in West Bridgford, which she felt would impact the majority of users and that increased charges for green waste bins would impact on collection rates. Councillor Plant felt that the three yearly Residents Survey was not an accurate indicator of satisfaction rates and believed that many residents would be willing to pay more Council Tax for better services, which would improve those rates.

Councillor Regan confirmed that the Conservative Group supported the rights of residents to live comfortably in their homes; however, he felt that there were better ways to address the DFG issue.

Councillor Ellis referred to the challenging economic times and stated that he would be supporting this sensible budget, which secured the Council's finances.

Councillor Gaunt thanked everyone involved, confirming that the two proposed amendments had been costed by the Finance Team. He acknowledged comments about setting up a petition but felt that given the urgency, a CGR was the best approach to address the democratic deficit in West Bridgford and that the first amendment would help those most in need.

Councillor J Walker stated that there was a common thread in the two amendments to help the most vulnerable and residents in West Bridgford and she felt that the CGR would cost very little in real terms, and if residents were told, she thought that they would find it acceptable. In respect of potentially

selling assets, she confirmed that this was referred to in the report.

Councillor Virdi agreed that this Council was future proofing itself and continued to effectively manage its finances, with a small increase in Council Tax, which recognised the cost of living for residents, and he felt that aspects of the alternative budget were too risky. Councillor Virdi stated that the Council did not rely on the New Homes Bonus (NHB), rather it made prudent, commercial decisions, and had an effective Transformation and Efficiency Plan. Reference had been made to raising taxes and reducing reserves, which was necessary to produce a balanced budget. Councillor Virdi agreed that the Borough had many high value properties; however, residents expected high quality services and the rural nature of the Borough resulted in additional costs and less Business Rates income, with Rushcliffe seventh in the county for overall funding. In respect of reserves, the majority was \$106 monies, with the rest carefully earmarked, and the budget was a result of diligent decision making, with the Council investing in its assets rather than selling them. Councillor Virdi reiterated that Rushcliffe did have the lowest Council Tax in the county, was debt free, investing in services and prudently using reserves to provide stability.

The Leader thanked the Labour Group for bringing the amendment and confirmed that no major assets had been identified for disposal. He reiterated that Rushcliffe continued to have the lowest Council Tax in the county, and decisions made by the County Council were not relevant to this Council's decision. The Leader questioned the timing for a CGR, given that consultation on LGR would be taking place this summer. The Leader concluded by reiterating that as the Council was financially well managed, it missed out on funding, and he was proud that the Council remained debt free, with a virtually balanced budget over five years, whilst identifying money from reserves for relevant projects and he reiterated his thanks to officers.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors M Barney, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, N Clarke, T Combellack, A Edyvean, S Ellis, E Georgiou, R Inglis, D Mason, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, N Regan, D Solomon, R Upton, D Virdi, R Walker, T Wells, D Wheeler, J Wheeler and G Williams

AGAINST: Councillors J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, S Dellar, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, C Grocock, R Mallender, S Mallender, L Plant, D Polenta, C Thomas, J Walker and L Way

It was RESOLVED that Council:

- a) accepts the report of the Council's Responsible Financial Officer on the robustness of the Council's budget and the adequacy of reserves (as detailed at attached Annex A);
- b) adopts the budget setting report and associated financial strategies 2025/26 to 2029/30 (attached Annex B) including changes to fees and

- charges regarding garden waste and car parking (Annex B, Appendix 5);
- c) adopts the Transformation and Efficiency Plan (at Annex B, Appendix 7);
 - d) adopts the Capital Programme (as set out in Annex B, Appendix 3);
 - e) adopts the Capital and Investment Strategy (at Annex B, Appendix 8);
 - f) sets Rushcliffe's 2025/26 Council Tax for a Band D property at £161.77 (increase from 2024/25 of £3.89 or 2.46%);
 - g) sets the Special Expenses for 2025/26 for West Bridgford, Ruddington and Keyworth, Appendix 1, resulting in the following Band D Council Tax levels for the Special Expense Areas:
 - i) West Bridgford £64.84 (£59.44 in 2024/25)
 - ii) Keyworth £3.21 (£4.69 in 2024/25)
 - iii) Ruddington £3.14 (£3.29 in 2024/25);
 - h) with regards to recommendations f) and g), sets the associated Bands in accordance with the formula in section 36(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992; and
 - i) adopts the Pay Policy Statement (at Annex B, Appendix 6).

Councillor Barney left the meeting at 9.27pm.

57 Council Tax Resolution 2025/26

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services outlining the Council's position on Council Tax for the year 2025/26.

The Leader advised that this was a technical process to set the Council Tax and moved the recommendation as detailed in the report.

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

Councillor Polenta reiterated that the Labour Group's priority was to provide public services to meet social needs, rather than balancing the books, and she felt that Council Tax was outdated, punishing those on the lowest income, as it failed to reflect the housing market and needed reform. The system punished areas with low property values, forcing Councils to set higher rates to fund basic services, and she believed that a fairer model of local taxation was required, and at the very least Council Tax bands should be revalued to challenge this injustice.

Councillor Birch was concerned about tax communication to residents and felt that Rushcliffe should be communicating more clearly what each council was responsible for and requested that his vote against this be recorded.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Viridi confirmed that he was in favour of positive communications and that officers would continue to consider communications.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Council Tax Resolution for 2025/26 as detailed in [Appendix A](#) to the report be approved.

Councillor Birch voted against the recommendation.

58 **Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning & Housing, Councillor Roger Upton, presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth regarding Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan.

Councillor Upton stated that since the Council meeting in September 2024, some important issues had required changes to be made, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the deadline for publishing the revised draft Plan with the updated housing targets, and the removal of all reference to Gedling Borough Council, following its decision to withdraw from the Partnership.

Councillor Upton explained that transitional arrangements were published on 12 December, which meant that the Plan could not be taken forward without making revisions to its proposed housing targets. The Council would now need to meet 80% of the Government's annual housing target, resulting in an increase of 600 homes over the time period, as set out in Table 1 of the report, with Table 2 confirming that the new target would not exceed the Council's existing housing supply, which Councillor Upton believed still provided sufficient protection to maintain a five year land supply. Council noted that if the 12 March deadline for publication was not met then a substantially revised or a new local Plan would need to be prepared. Councillor Upton referred to the revised Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, confirming that it had been prepared following significant public consultation, and considered by the cross party Local Development Forum (LDF) Group, which had recently unanimously supported it. Councillor Upton reiterated that if the Plan was not supported, it would be unable to proceed in its current form, and the Council would be without a Plan and at risk of speculative, unplanned housing development. If approved, the Plan would be subject to a further six week public consultation, followed by a public examination, with potential adoption in the autumn of 2026.

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

In supporting the recommendation, Councillor Calvert reminded Council that the Labour Group had previously voted in favour of the publication of the draft Plan, and not its wholesale approval, and as part of the consultation, whilst it supported the partnership approach, it was disappointed that some areas had not participated. The Group also supported having closer coordination to pool expertise and having the design and layout of the site for the Gamston and North of Tollerton allocation determined by a Master Plan and Design Code.

There was support for the Policy regarding housing mix, together with a suggestion for a new policy to increase the percentage of affordable homes in the Borough and the Group recommended some transport infrastructure schemes.

Councillor Way thanked officers, stating that the Plan needed to be adopted, to avoid having to start again, and that it was incumbent on the Council to do as much as it could to ensure that the Borough remained a good place to live.

Councillor Chewings thanked officers and clarified that the LDF Group had endorsed the Plan to come to Full Council and not its content and felt that this presented an opportunity to reconsider allocated housing sites. He reiterated his disappointment about the removal of Tollerton Airfield due its vital role in the community and questioned if the impact on the Air Ambulance had been assessed. Councillor Chewings objected to housing numbers dictating the Borough's planning future and advised that he could not support this flawed Plan, and he requested that a recorded vote be taken.

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 R Mallender referred to possible contamination on the airfield site, which developers would need to investigate. He noted the considerable time spent to reach this point and felt that the Plan should go out to consultation, where suggestions to remove proposed sites could be made.

The Leader advised that it would not be possible to remove specific areas from the Plan, as it would then fail and the time to raise those issues would be at the Inquiry. The Leader confirmed that the Council was in discussions with the Air Ambulance regarding future arrangements, and in the meantime the developers had granted an extension of time.

Councillor Thomas suggested that the issue of potential contamination on the airfield site be looked at as part of the process in recommendation d) of the report.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Butler reiterated thanks to officers and the LDF Group, referred to the many years it had taken to reach this point, confirming that the Council must have a Plan and expressing his disappointment that Gedling Borough Council had withdrawn. He welcomed the consultation, and hoped everyone would respond, and stated that the Plan related to provision of essential infrastructure and services, as well as housing, and without a Plan, speculative development could take place.

Councillor Upton reiterated that this was a long process and to the necessity of approving the Plan tonight, and he confirmed that the time to raise issues about specific sites would be at the Inquiry.

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

FOR: Councillors, J Billin, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, S Calvert, J Chaplain, N Clarke, T Combella, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, H Om, H Parekh, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta, N Regan, D Solomon, 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 Council:

- a) approved the withdrawal of the previous Regulation 19 Publication Draft of the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan, which was published on 4 November 2024;
- b) approved the revised Regulation 19 Publication Draft Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan and revised Policies Map Changes document, in so far as they relate to Rushcliffe Borough, and agrees to their publication for a six week public representation period;
- c) agreed that, following the representation period, the revised Publication Draft Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan, revised Policies Map Changes document, all supporting documents and all representations received be submitted for public examination; and
- d) delegated authority to the Director – Development and Economic Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing to make any minor editing changes to the revised Publication Draft Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan prior to its publication.

59 **Amendments to the Constitution**

The Portfolio Holder for Business & Growth, Councillor Abby Brennan, presented the report of the Monitoring Officer regarding Amendments to the Constitution.

Councillor Brennan, advised that it was a statutory duty to keep the Constitution up to date and review it annually, with the recommendations considered by the Governance Scrutiny Group and relevant officers, with the proposed amendments set out in red in the Appendix, together with changes from the Governance Scrutiny Group in blue. The amendments were designed to support the efficient running of Full Council meetings and the conduct of business and it was for each council to determine its own constitution to meet its own business needs.

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

Councillor Polenta felt that the Constitution should provide a framework through which Councillors could challenge policy, rigorously scrutinise decisions and ensure that all voices were heard. Councillor Polenta stated that any Councillor should have the right to call for a recorded vote without needing

other Councillors support, that questions should be heard in public, rather than receiving a written response and that the scope of motions should not be restricted, as they should be used to send messages on broader economic and political matters that impacted residents.

Councillor Thomas felt there was a role for debate about important issues outside the direct responsibility of the Council, to allow Councillors to come to a joint view and agree to put pressure on other agencies regarding issues that concerned residents. She felt that more work was required on the proposed amendments and that it should be considered again by the Governance Scrutiny Group.

Councillor Birch expressed concern about limiting the scope of motions as he felt that this helped Councillors represent their constituents better, was educational and allowed democratic debate. He thought that the number of supporters for a recorded vote should be equivalent to membership of the smallest political party, as recorded votes played an important role in holding power to account and was a tool for opposition Councillors to use.

Councillor R Mallender echoed comments regarding the scope of motions and felt that discussing matters beyond the remit of the Council helped with sound decisions making.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Edyvean confirmed that the Governance Scrutiny Group had considered each amendment, and whilst not everyone agreed with them, the recommendations had been agreed and he felt that the Council was here to serve and deliver for residents, rather than discussing matters outside the Council's remit.

Councillor Brennan felt that questions to Council were often timely, with a written reply providing a prompter response. She referred to the wording of the amendment regarding the scope of motions and did not agree that it was restrictive, as it still allowed the Council to discuss and focus on matters that impacted or affected residents. Councillor Brennan also referred to comments that had previously been made by Councillors and members of the public asking why the Council was debating matters that it could do nothing about.

It was **RESOLVED** that Council adopt the proposed revisions to the Constitution.

Councillor Birch voted against the recommendation.

60 **Appointment of Independent Member to Governance Scrutiny Group**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transformation and Governance, Councillor Virdi presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services regarding Appointment of Independent Person to Governance Scrutiny Group.

Councillor Virdi stated that the report highlighted factors of good practice and governance as set out in the Redmond Review and advised that Government was looking at making this mandatory. The Governance Scrutiny Group supported having an independent member and Councillor Virdi clarified that it

would be a non-voting role. He referred to the job description and person specification as set out in Appendix A to the report, with remuneration for the role set against comparable benchmarks.

Councillor J Wheeler seconded the recommendation.

It was **RESOLVED** that Council:

- a) approved the appointment of an Independent Person to Governance Scrutiny Group;
- b) approved the role description, skills and competencies and person specification at Appendix A;
- c) authorised the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Governance Scrutiny Group, to undertake the recruitment process and appoint to the position of Independent Person on the basis of a two-year appointment;
- d) approved an allowance of £800 per annum for this appointment; and
- e) delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Terms of Reference of the Governance Scrutiny Group and the Councillor's Allowance Scheme accordingly.

61 **Notices of Motion**

No motions had been submitted.

62 **Questions from Councillors**

The questions from Councillors were not considered. A written response would be provided after the meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.25 pm.

CHAIR