

## **Corporate Overview Group**

### **Chairman's Foreword**

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Corporate Overview Group 2024/25 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. The Corporate Overview Group oversees the Council's other scrutiny group work programmes based on concerns highlighted by quarterly financial and performance monitoring reports, as well as items on the Cabinet Forward Plan and priorities within the Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Overview Group have ensured that the executive be held to account by approving topics to be discussed at scrutiny groups. Additionally, the Group have scrutinised financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

### **Councillor Tina Combellack Chairman**



## **What we are responsible for?**

The Corporate Overview Group responsibilities include:

- Implementing identified improvements to scrutiny including training of scrutiny members, construction of new work programmes and reporting methods
- Creating and receiving feedback on work programmes for the Growth and Development, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Groups based on the Cabinet Forward Plan, Corporate Strategy, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Investment Strategy and Transformation Plan
- Scrutinising financial and performance management reports on a quarterly basis to ensure the smooth running of the Council and delegate any necessary investigations into concerning elements of these reports to the most appropriate scrutiny group via their work programme
- Reviewing reports in respect of health and safety, diversity and customer feedback to ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties.

## **Our work this year**

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

- Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes at each meeting
- Finance and Performance Management at each meeting
- Diversity Annual Report and update on the Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Annual Update on Strategic Tasks
- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Business Continuity Strategy
- Annual Customer Feedback Report 2023/24
- White Ribbon Action Plan.

## **Consideration of Scrutiny Work Programmes**

In line with the Terms of Reference, at every meeting the Group's members considered topics for scrutiny that had been put forward by Councillors and Officers. Following discussion, the following items were added to the work programmes of scrutiny groups for the year 2024/25:

- The health of our town and village centres
- Performance of Metropolitan Thames Valley House (MTVH)

In relation to the Housing association customer service and maintenance scrutiny request, the Group agreed for Councillors to work with the Director for Neighbourhoods to refine the request to help clarify the function of the scrutiny request. The Group noted that contact details for the Borough's housing providers were available on the Councillors Portal and a link to it was circulated to the Councillor Group.

The Group agreed that the scrutiny request in relation to playgrounds built on new developments be held until after Open Spaces Management scrutiny had taken place and for a briefing note to be provided about the current situation for how decisions about play areas and decisions about s106 monies were taken.

## **Quarterly Finance and Performance Management**

A report focusing on the Council's finances and performance was delivered at each meeting by officers. Officers provided a summary of the key points in the meeting and the Group was able to discuss any concerns. Over the course of this year, the following issues have been discussed:

- Impacts from changes in interest rates on costs, investment balances and underspend
- the Council's revenue outturn position
- The value of the Council's Multi Asset investments (pooled funds)
- UKSPF and Rural England Prosperity Funding
- the Council bringing Streetwise inhouse
- Performance of Rushcliffe Oaks Crematorium
- Carbon reduction and progress towards achieving carbon neutral status by 2030, including allocating monies towards carbon offsetting and land acquisition potential
- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Fly tipping
- Edwalton Golf Course
- Gypsy and traveller sites within the Borough
- S106 and CIL funding from developer contributions and plans for spending this in the Council budget
- West Bridgford Special Expenses
- Monies allocated to provide affordable housing
- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Progress regarding East Midlands Devolution
- Reporting on usage of community facilities
- Customer Services response to telephone and email enquiries.

## **Diversity Annual Report and update on the Equality and Diversity Strategy**

The Service Manager for Economic Growth and Property presented the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme update and Diversity Annual Report 2023 to 2024 to the Group which included diversity information in relation to Officers, Councillors and applicants. In relation to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme Action Plan the Group were informed that the Council had established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme Steering Group, had undertaken a review of the Equality Impact Assessment process and had carried out a review of Equality and Diversity staff training. The Group learned about UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) which had been used to support particular groups of the local community and how the Council was working with the dementia friendly community, partners and community and voluntary organisations.

The Group asked questions relating to:

- diversity of communication with the local community
- gender pay gap reporting
- training on sign language and transexual and LGBT awareness
- information on outputs from the UKSPF projects funding
- the increase in the number of employees not wanting to give their nationality.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2025:
Consider and endorse the information provided for the diversity annual report	The Group reviewed and endorsed the report.
Review the action taken so far as a part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme action plan and make suggestions for future action or areas of focus	The Group suggested that the Council request Councillor’s ethnicity at the next election intake which will be reviewed when the next Councillor election in 2027 is currently scheduled. The Group asked for information on outputs from the UKSPF projects funding which will be provided at the next update to the Group in June 2025

### Health and Safety Annual Report

The Strategic Human Resources Manager presented the Health and Safety Annual report for the period of April 2023 to March 2024 which provided an overview of the health and safety risk profile and health and safety provision for the Council and about key activities that had taken place over the last twelve months, including the annual review of Health and Safety policies. It was confirmed that the Council had determined to recruit a permanent Health and Safety Advisor.

The Group asked specific questions relating to:

- progress towards achieving health and safety goals
- work days lost to accidents and injury and asked if these were due to any particular reasons
- workplace assessments and whether the reasons recorded reasons for absence such as for mental health and stress
- health and safety work with Councillors
- Health and safety at the Council’s leisure and community facility sites
- chemical storage, including expiration dates
- training completion rates.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2025:
Consider the detailed information contained within the Annual Health and Safety Report	The Group scrutinised and asked questions and provided feedback on the information within the report.
Note that a new permanent Health and Safety Advisor has been appointed	The Group noted the permanent recruitment into the Health and Safety Advisor post.
Note the significant progress made against the health and safety goals and objectives previously agreed by Corporate Overview Group for the financial year 2023/24	The Group noted the significant progress made on the goals set for 2024/25 and endorsed the objectives proposed for 2024/25. An update Health and Safety Annual Report is scheduled to be

Endorse the proposed health and safety objectives for 2024/25 as set out in the report.	presented to the Group at its September meeting.
---	--

### **Business Continuity Strategy**

The Emergency Planning Officer presented the Council's Business Continuity Strategy for 2024-2027 which set out the Council's arrangements to provide critical functions and services in the face of a significant disruptive incident and which provided good resilience to both employees, residents and third-party partnerships. The Group learned that the strategy considered the Council's Risk Management review process and aligned with the latest organisational priorities and was regularly reviewed and updated and that regular training was provided for Officers

<b>The Group agreed to:</b>	<b>Progress Update – June 2025:</b>
Scrutinise and provide comment on the Business Continuity Strategy	The Group commended the Council's emergency planning response to the past year's storms and flooding events. The Group highlighted the importance of communication and a link to emergency planning information has been added to the Councillors Portal.

### **Customer Feedback Annual Report**

The Service Manager Corporate Services presented the Annual Customer Feedback Report for 2024/25 which provided information about complaints and compliments received by the Council about the services that it delivered and also provided comparisons to previous year's performances and those of other local authorities in the East Midlands. The Service Manager Corporate Services summarised that there were no matters which caused alarm and that the overall picture was one of steadiness and stability.

<b>The Group agreed to:</b>	<b>Progress Update – June 2025:</b>
Scrutinise and comment on the customer feedback for 2023/24	The Group reviewed and asked questions and provided feedback on the information.
Endorse the Rushcliffe Complaints Policy 2024	The Group noted the low level of complaints received and endorsed the policy.

### **White Ribbon Action Plan**

The Director for Neighbourhoods presented the White Ribbon Action Plan Report which set out how the Council had sought re-accreditation to become a White Ribbon UK organisation and how an Action Plan had been developed, with progress on it to

be reported to the Group. The Group heard how the Council had established a new White Ribbon Steering Group and had shared communications with Officers and Councillors to raise awareness and had put ambassadors and champions in place. Training for Councillors had been provided by Broxtowe Women’s Group and the ‘It Starts with Men’ campaign and White Ribbon Day had been promoted. The Council was committed to collaborating with key partners and supported the Nottinghamshire Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and its associated action plan.

The Group asked specific questions relating to:

- promoting the campaign through the various Council owned community facilities and leisure centres
- ensuring that sub-contractors were aware that the Council fostered this approach
- other safety initiatives in operation such as Ask Angela and the J9 Safe Places.

The Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2025:
Note the progress made since the motion was passed, including confirmation of re-accreditation as a White Ribbon UK organisation	The Group noted the progress made since the Motion had been brought in March 2024 and supported the actions that had taken place. The Group commented that the training provided had been excellent.
Recognise the actions taken to date as listed in sections 4.2 and 4.7 of the report	
Note the forthcoming actions as listed in section 4.6 of the report.	

### Member Panels

The Group did not establish any Member Panels this year.

### Call-ins

The Group did not discuss any call-ins this year.

### Looking forward to the year ahead

Following a busy year for the Council’s scrutiny functions, all members of Corporate Overview Group are looking forward to developing comprehensive work programmes for the scrutiny groups in 2025/26.