



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 2 April 2026

West Bridgford Customer Contact Point

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. For the Communities Scrutiny Group to assess the impact of the relocation of our Customer Service face-to-face offer in West Bridgford following the move from Fountain Court to West Bridgford Library in 2024.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group consider the content of the report (and presentation from officers) and identify any follow-up actions required.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The relocation of the Council's Customer Service Centre at Fountain Court on Gordon Road in West Bridgford to the local library took place in 2024 with the aim of maintaining service levels whilst delivering even better value for money. The report considers the background and decision-making made by the Council to continue delivering this frontline service and if any further action or review is required.

4. Supporting Information

Background

- 4.1. In February 2024, RBC's Cabinet began to explore plans to relocate its Fountain Court Customer Service Centre on Gordon Road to West Bridgford Library to help deliver an even better, value for money service without significantly impacting customers.
- 4.2. Given the relative decreasing numbers visiting the centre, compared to 2019/2020 when it opened, it was felt the Council should optimise the use of its assets in a new operating era after COVID-19. It referenced possible benefits as bringing its then occupied commercial unit back to the market to further boost the town centre, leveraging financial savings and the possibility of a shared service space opportunity with a public sector partner.

- 4.3. The Fountain Court site opened three days a week from 8.30am to 5pm on Mondays and Thursdays, and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays, with annual costs exceeding £55,000 mostly consisting of rent, utilities and business rates.
- 4.4. Since re-opening after the lifting of COVID restrictions in June 2021, face to face enquiries gradually fell year on year with 4,578 visits in 2022 and 3,780 in 2023. This decrease was also in comparison before Covid where visitors were over 10,000 per annum in 2018, prompting the Cabinet and officers to question the best way forward for the service.
- 4.5. RBC are contracted to occupy Fountain Court until February 2029. The lease allowed the Council to explore sub-letting and assignment options, subject to the landlord's approval and an Authorised Guarantee Agreement. This was confirmed and guarantees all covenants contained within the current lease including but not least rent, business rates, service charges and building insurance.
- 4.6. In line with the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2025, an action point was agreed to examine all Customer Service sites including existing leases and service level agreements with partners and reviewing each site annually. This was to assess location and if each site met customers' needs such as still being easily accessible, located to nearby public transport stops or car parking, and had appropriate facilities to address the range of customers' needs.
- 4.7. When the 2024 review was completed for Fountain Court, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder and officers identified the possible reuse of the asset for a better value service. With limited suitable local venues, the library's location was identified as suitable as close to all West Bridgford car parks and many public transport routes, accessible and similar to the Fountain Court site in location and convenience. It also offered a familiar landmark for many Rushcliffe residents to locate the service.
- 4.8. Inspire, who operate libraries on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council, were receptive to the move and offered RBC an existing alcove to the left of library entrance as a possible service area with space for four desks.
- 4.9. Members of Cabinet viewed the area in March 2024 and agreed, subject to advice from both the Council's and Inspire's property teams, of converting it to create a Customer Service Contact Point. Concurrently, a tenant was sought to sub-let the Fountain Court premises with the landlord's permission. This was secured in May 2024.
- 4.10. Both RBC and Inspire agreed a three-year lease at the library, with an option to extend, allowing all parties to evaluate the success of the location in terms of both service delivery and demand.
- 4.11. Alterations took place and the service opened in the library on September 2, 2024. Between the closure of the Fountain Court site and opening at the Library, customers were without access to face-to-face services in West

Bridgford for three days. Customers were signposted to other contact points as required and full telephone and online services continued. A project team including RBC's Customer Services and Property Services worked in partnership with Inspire to deliver the ICT and property requirements.

- 4.12. Opening hours at the library are similar to the Fountain Court site, switched slightly to align with then Library opening hours to be Mondays 9am to 5pm, Thursdays 9am to 5pm and Fridays 9am to 4.30pm.
- 4.13. A sustained publicity campaign across Council channels and the local press informed residents and stakeholders of the move which saw very limited impact on customers arriving at the incorrect location wishing to access the service.

Impact on customers and services

- 4.14. The impact on customers and services between the two sites has not been significant with customer numbers increasing when comparing the last 12 months before leaving Fountain Court and the 12 months after starting the service at the library site.

Face to face visits Fountain Court August 2023-July 2024 (last full year of operation)	Face to face visits West Bridgford Library September 2024-August 2025 (first full year of operation)
4,193	4,554

- 4.15. Provision of services is essentially the same at both sites with the exception being housing and licensing appointments which now take place at Rushcliffe Arena as required with convenient close car parking and close transport links still available.
- 4.16. Residents seeking advice approach one of three advisors for face-to-face support, the same number as at Fountain Court and taxi drivers also take tests on a fourth desk that doubles as a temporary place for short drop-down point for customer services supervisors.
- 4.17. The nature and volume of enquiries has not changed considerably. The most popular Customer Service enquiries for the same period were:

Most popular service enquiries Fountain Court August 2023-July 2024	Most popular service enquiries West Bridgford Library September 2024-August 2025
Council tax and business rates Waste services Garden waste service Strategic housing Benefits	Council tax and business rates Waste services Garden waste service Benefits Environmental Health

- 4.18. The Council continues to develop the breadth of its digital offering enabling residents to access services at a time and in a way that suits them best.

However, it also remains committed to providing a face-to-face offering for those residents who prefer this method of engagement.

- 4.19. Meeting rooms and quiet areas in the library were identified to be available on demand should residents request it, maintaining existing standards and accessibility and matching arrangements at other contact points at Bingham, East Leake and Cotgrave.
- 4.20. In the 12 months before the move was made, there were seven housing appointments at Fountain Court and four requests for private conversations. As of February 2026, there have been 12 housing appointments and two requests logged for private conversations at the library (since September 2024), utilising a library meeting room on both occasions. There have been no other concerns about the of lack of privacy recorded by advisors. Should rooms be unavailable, an appointment can be made at short notice, including at Rushcliffe Arena if needed the same day.
- 4.21. A customer satisfaction survey in late 2025, and repeated in early 2026, has seen 96% of customers respond favourably on the service:

Question	Response
How easy was it to find our contact point?	Very easy 96%
How satisfied are you with the service you received today?	Very satisfied 95%
Were the staff knowledgeable and able to answer your query?	Yes 96%
Do you feel any of the personal data you discussed today was handled with care and confidentiality?	Yes 96%

Staff feedback

- 4.22. Customer Services Advisors and Supervisors have transitioned to the new site successfully. For staff comfort, some additional work was required to ensure the alcove area was carpeted, a blind installed due to low sun through the window at certain times and requesting Inspire amend a heater above the library entrance door.
- 4.23. Following feedback to Inspire, the library's thermostat was also increased accordingly during winter months and mobile heaters introduced on some days as required.
- 4.24. In an anonymous staff survey with Customer Service advisors in 2025, minor issues with the above conditions were cited and these have now been resolved. These included addressing with Inspire masonry bees that were congregating in a light fitting above the alcove. Work has since taken place to ensure this issue does not continue.
- 4.25. Staff have access to a communal kitchen to spend lunch and other breaks as needed and there have been positive working relationships with Inspire staff.

- 4.26. The remaining proximity to a town centre has also been cited as a benefit to working in an advisor role and the site is adjacent to the largest of the three local council car parks.
- 4.27. The Council's Corporate Warning Register is used as required to protect members of staff should customers act inappropriately.

Inspire contract and relocation savings

- 4.28. The Council and Inspire agreed an initial three year-agreement from August 2024, aware of the uncertainty of Local Government Reorganisation.
- 4.29. This was initially costed at £2,500 in rent per annum and £2,500 in contract services per annum plus a nominal inflation-linked annual increase. This is for cleaning of the alcove area and upkeep of the communal facilities shared with Inspire staff. Subsequently, the move is saving around £50,000 per annum compared with Fountain Court, with costs of the move offset in these savings for the service. The rent is a tenth of the cost of the Fountain Court site. Based on the revenue costs the costs per face to face customer have reduced from £13.12 to £1.10, providing better value for money for Rushcliffe residents, combined with no reduction in performance.

Relocation costs

- 4.30. The costs of the move from Fountain Court to the library were (a payback of less than one year):

Item	Cost
ICT infrastructure installation – internet line, cabling to comms box at back of building, remote access point	£11,000
Property installation at Library - furniture and acoustics, joinery and bookshelf removal, redecoration	£6,500
Legal fees	£4,000
Property agents marketing	£3,000
Fountain Court property removal	£2,500
Arena ICT equipment	£1,016
Total	£28,016

Comparison to other contact points

- 4.31. For comparison, visitor numbers for the other contact points in the Borough that offer a similar environment to answer customer queries:

Cotgrave Hub, Mondays: July 2023-July 2024	694
September 2024-August 2025	701
East Leake Library, Wednesdays: July 2023-July 2024	221
September 2024-August 2025	243
Bingham Medical Centre, Thursdays: July 2023-July 2024	487
September 2024-August 2025	542

Looking forward

4.32. The contract until August 2027 will be reviewed with Local Government Reorganisation in mind to potentially take this to April 2028.

4.33. The Customer Services team will continue to look where it can improve customer experience when visiting the library including further customer satisfaction surveys and listening and responding to feedback in its day-to-day operations.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no direct risks or uncertainties arising from this report.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report, however, the service will continue to listen to feedback on where it could improve this service with equality and inclusion in mind.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no specific equalities implications arising from this report. The Council's Corporate Warning Register is used as required should customers act inappropriately when engaging the Council.

6.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no direct Biodiversity Net Gain implications arising from this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	No impact
Quality of Life	No impact
Efficient Services	The Council is committed to deliver the best services for residents, in the most efficient way possible, mindful of the many ways customers wish to interact on their queries.
Sustainable Growth	No impact

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Communities Scrutiny Group consider the content of the report (and presentation from officers) and identify any follow-up actions required.

For more information contact:	Ed Palmer Communications and Customer Services Manager Tel: 0115 914 8559 epalmer@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	Appendix 1: Scrutiny Request