

## Communities Scrutiny Group

### Chair's Foreword

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Group 2025/26 focusing on the impact of scrutiny. This Group specifically focuses upon the Council's community partnerships, areas of community concern and the Council's responsibility to be environmentally sustainable.

The Group has explored the Council's Communities responsibilities in line with the Council's priorities within the Corporate Strategy, which include:

- Reviewing the Council's partnerships to ensure that community needs are being met and the partnership is providing good value for money.
- Identifying areas of community concern, exploring how this can be met and making recommendations to that effect.
- Considering concerns specific to the local area in terms of health and wellbeing and making recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents.
- Considering projects and initiatives to further the Council's efforts to protect the environment of the Borough and promote environmental sustainability to our residents.



Councillor Hetvi Parekh  
Chair



Councillor Liz Plant  
Vice-Chair

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

The Communities Scrutiny Group's remit is to consider relevant topics, in line with the Council's priorities, taking into account the Corporate Strategy and those of officers and Councillors for inclusion in a work programme agreed by the Corporate Overview Group.

Both Councillors and officers are required to complete a scrutiny request to outline a topic they would like to be considered for scrutiny. The request summarises the issue of concern as well as the key lines of enquiry for review.

## **Our work this year:**

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

- Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing.
- Flood Risk Update.
- Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation including HMOs.
- Carbon Management Plan Review.
- West Bridgford Contact Point.

## **Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing**

The Strategic Housing Manager introduced representatives from Metropolitan Trent Valley Housing (MTVH) who delivered a presentation to Members with information about the services provided by MTVH within the Borough. MTVH representatives informed the Group about recent feedback from the Regulator of Social Housing inspection and presented information in relation to complaints, community safety and anti-social behaviour. It was explained that MTVH had adopted a joint-agency approach with the Police and Social and Mental Health Care with the aim of providing early intervention, support and mediation.

The Group were informed about property repairs and development and investment made in Rushcliffe homes over the past decade, including decarbonisation, investment in community-based programmes and noted MTVH's future investment programme which summarised their key areas for improvement and service delivery, including:

- Communication and Transparency.
- Responsive Service Delivery.
- Collaboration.
- Accountability and Ownership.

The Group asked questions in relation to:

- Affordable Housing.
- Housing Stock.
- Adaptions to properties.
- Responses to queries and contact information.

- Anti-social behaviour.
- Legacy assets and garage sites.
- Property repairs.
- Advisory and support services for tenants.
- Damp and mould.
- Complaints process.

The Scrutiny Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2025:
Consider the information provided in the report and the presentation by MTVH and provided feedback to support future working relationships	The Group considered, scrutinised and questioned the information provided
The Chair to raise a further scrutiny request at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview Group for MTVH to provide the Group with a further update on performance in 12 months' time	A future report on MTVH is scheduled to come to Communities Scrutiny Group in October 2026

## Flood Risk Update

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented the Flood Risk Update report and introduced Mr Wells, the Principal Officer Flood Risk Management from Nottinghamshire County Council. Mr Wells gave a presentation to the Group and outlined the role of Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). He said that NCC coordinated flood risk management related to ordinary watercourses, surface water and ground water flooding and explained that main river flooding was managed by the Environment Agency, sewers were managed by Severn Trent Water and some land areas by the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board.

The Group were informed that NCC delivered the capital and revenue flood risk management schemes, published Section 19 reports and were a statutory consultee for surface water to Local and County planning authorities. Mr Wells explained that NCC maintained a register of assets having critical impact on local flooding and published the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan (LFRMS) and worked with communities to learn about local knowledge on flood risk and impact. He explained that NCC managed the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) which assessed the current level of risk in the County, by area, and which provided an overview of areas at risk and assisted in determining where to direct funding. The current PFRA was published in July 2023.

Mr Wells explained that NCC was a statutory consultee for all planning authorities in the County for surface water in major developments, but not river or sewer flooding. He discussed flood risk in Rushcliffe and presented information about the flood impacts from recent storms and informed the Group about flood mitigation works undertaken by NCC across the Borough. He informed the Group about the Property Flood Resilience Programme (PFR) which delivered flood resilience measures to at risk properties.

The Group asked questions in relation to:

- Costs and charges to Homeowners.
- Flood mitigation.
- Reinstatement of river meanders.
- Funding for preventative measures.
- Property development on flood plains.
- Performance measures.
- Community resilience.
- Engagement with agencies.
- Communication.
- Flood risk modelling and strategy.
- Contingency planning and resilience.

The Scrutiny Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2026:
Scrutinise the contents of the report and presentation	The Group reviewed and questioned the information presented asked for a letter to be sent to Severn Trent Water regarding the difficulty and frustration experienced by Councillors in contacting them and the Director of Neighbourhoods has written to them
Provide feedback to the Lead Local Flood Authority on the latest flood risk profile for the Borough	The Group asked for contact information for the key flood agencies to be shared and the information was circulated to the Councillor Group

### **Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation including HMOs**

The Assistant Director for Public Protection introduced the Asylum Dispersal and Contingency Accommodation including HMOs report and introduced the Home Office and Serco representatives, who provided an overview of the role of their roles in housing asylum seekers.

The Home Office representative informed the Group that the Home Office had a legal obligation to accommodate asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute whilst their asylum application was being considered as part of the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999. In relation to accommodation, the Home Office representative said that this was procured by the Home Office’s accommodation providers with consultation taking place for every property procured in every local authority. The Group was informed that AAPs were regularly reviewed and refreshed and monitored.

The Serco Representative confirmed to the Group that Serco was the accommodation provider for the Home Office for Northwest Midlands and East of England and said that it was working on moving away from using asylum contingency hotels towards delivering the asylum full dispersal model alongside the Home Office. In response to feedback, Serco now undertook an individual property consultation process with the local authority before progressing with any property

In relation to identification of properties, the Serco Representative informed the Group that Serco was looking for a range of different accommodation types, with currently most within Rushcliffe being HMOs. The Group learned that Serco did not buy properties but rather rented them and offered normal rental rates, with property standards that were compliant with contractual requirements and local authority standards, and properties subject to monthly inspections and local authority and home office inspections, with asylum seekers able to report defects themselves through the agreed mechanisms.

The Group asked questions in relation to:

- Complaints and concerns raised about HMO properties.
- Consultation with the local authority and whether the Council's enforcement or complaint history for a property or nearby properties was taken into consideration.
- Funding for local services.
- Access to services and outreach support.
- Tenancy and rental agreements.
- The notification process for potential dispersal properties in the Borough.
- Selective licensing.

The Scrutiny Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2026:
Scrutinise the content of this report	The Group reviewed, scrutinised and provided feedback on the information presented
Provide feedback to the representatives of the Home Office and Serco on the application of government asylum dispersal policy within Rushcliffe	The Group questioned and provided feedback to the Home Office and Serco representatives

### **Carbon Management Action Plan Review**

The Communities Manager introduced the Carbon Management Plan Update report which was the fifth year of presenting an update to Scrutiny and the Team Manager for Environment gave a detailed presentation to the Group. He said that significant progress had been made towards the Council's 2030 net-zero target and the Government's 2050 UK target. A number of key projects that the Council had achieved were highlighted, being:

- Rushcliffe Arena Solar Project.
- Cotgrave Leisure Centre, Sir Julien Cahn and Gamston Community Hall decarbonation Projects.
- 90% reduction in fleet emissions.
- Acquisition of land at Wolds Wood and Rushcliffe Woods for offsetting.
- £860k of Grants from Trees for Carbon fund granted for planting and managing trees cover at Wolds Wood and Rushcliffe Woods.
- Warm Homes: Local Grant and Energy Company Obligation 4 across East Leake and Borough wide.

- EV Charge Points at Nursery and Bridgford Road Carparks.
- Home Energy Advice Team 2.
- Facilitating Ethical Solar Loans at Railway Heritage Centre Ruddington.

The Team Manager for Environment informed the Group about the Council's key projects for 2026-27, being:

- Gresham Sports Pavillion - install solar PV and improved water management system.
- Edwalton Golf Course Refurbishment – including energy measures and adding solar PV to roof.
- Streetwise Solar – solar electric scheme on the roof to supplement EV charge bays installed last year.
- Hound Lodge Energy Efficiency – development of implementation of insulation programme.
- Develop a Scope 3 (supply chain emissions) monitoring and reporting mechanism for all RBC operations to support mapping and maximising efficiencies.
- Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP).

The Group asked questions in relation to:

- long term protection of the woodlands being planted for sequestration.
- Rushcliffe Arena solar panel project and future costs and savings.
- Solar canopies on carparks.
- EV charging points.
- LGR and future commitments to climate targets.
- HVO and Scope 3 emissions.
- Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP).

The Scrutiny Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2026:
<p>Note the progress to date of the adopted carbon management action plan and priority projects for the forthcoming financial year 2026/27</p>	<p>The Group reviewed the information presented and asked a variety of questions about aspects of the Plan and the activities and actions undertaken by the Council and noted the progress made. The Group asked for information about financial savings and economic benefit to the Council and local area and it was agreed that this will be included in the next update to the Group. The Group also suggested that the next update report be scheduled for the July 2027 meeting to allow Officers time to include the latest emissions data</p>

## West Bridgford Contact Point

The Communications and Customer Services Manager presented the West Bridgford Customer Contact Point report to the Group and thanked Members who had attended the site visit earlier in the week. The Group learned that the Council had moved to Fountain Court in 2020, a few weeks before the pandemic began, however, due to a change in behaviours and interactions and a drop in visits after the pandemic, the Council had reviewed its customer access provision at all its sites and had identified that moving the West Bridgford centre to the Library would both improve service and provide financial savings. The Communications and Customer Services Manager updated the Group with information about opening times and dates, currently Monday, Thursday and Friday which had been identified as the busiest times of the week and confirmed that being situated in the Library had made the customer centre easier to find and more accessible. For comparison, the Group was provided with information about face-to-face customer service provision across the County.

The Group were presented with information about types of contact and the main types of service enquiries being received, with most contact being via the telephone, followed by emails and then webform contact and then site visits. The Group was informed about provision for holding private conversations at West Bridgford Library.

The Group asked questions in relation to:

- Types of enquiries received by customer services.
- Provision for private conversations.
- Resilience should the number of customer visits increase.
- Movement of staff across customer service contact points.
- LGR.
- Communication of information about customer service contact points.

The Scrutiny Group agreed to:	Progress Update – June 2025:
Consider the content of the report (and presentation from officers) and identify any follow up actions required	The Group reviewed, scrutinised and asked question about the information presented

## 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

The Communities Scrutiny Group is looking forward to developing a comprehensive work programme for the year ahead.