

## Report of the Executive Manager – Communities

### Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning Councillor R Upton

#### 1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on progress made in delivering the actions arising from the Planning Peer Challenge, with particular reference to the introduction of controlled public speaking at Planning Committee and any changes which have been introduced. The Planning Peer Challenge review was conducted between 15 – 17 February 2017 and looked at the Council's planning services and the challenges faced delivering the significant growth agenda. Following publication of the final report, an action plan was agreed in response to the key issues identified in the report.
- 1.2. For ease of reference, a copy of the final Planning Peer Challenge report is attached as **Appendix 1**. The recommendations from the report cover the key elements which are set out below:
  - **Planning Committee** – to improve public engagement and provide a refocus of the committee on strategic decision-making
  - **Resources** – Review development management and planning policy resources
  - **Support quicker implementation of growth** - use programme management to take an overview of the strategic sites and have flexibility to switch resources. Explore further opportunities for support from the Local Enterprise Partnership and Joint Planning Advisory Board (JPAB)
  - **Strategic Growth Board** – Examine opportunities for the current strategic growth board to develop or support creation of a 'strategic projects delivery board'
- 1.3. The action plan contained in **Appendix 2** identifies the actions to address these recommendations and provides an update on the delivery of each action.

#### 2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- a) Progress in delivering the actions identified in the Action Plan is noted.

- b) The changes made to public speaking protocol are formally adopted (attached as **Appendix 3**).
- c) Minor changes to the public speaking protocol be delegated to the Executive Manager – Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing and Chairman of the Planning Committee.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

The delivery of the action plan will ensure the Council's planning services are aligned to delivering the significant growth agenda. Furthermore, public engagement with the planning service has been enhanced through improved committee procedures, including but not limited to controlled public speaking.

### **4. Supporting Information**

- 4.1. Following receipt of the final report from the Planning Peer Challenge, an action plan was formulated to deliver the recommendations in the report. The Action plan is attached to this report as an Appendix and provides the current situation with regard to each of the actions. The majority of these actions are now completed.
- 4.2. A number of changes have been made to the Planning Committee and procedures, including changes to the layout of the furniture in the Council Chamber to improve visibility, audibility and engagement with any members of the public in attendance at the meeting, the start time of the committee has been changed, starting at 6.30pm as opposed to the previous time of 7pm, and the number of Councillors serving on the committee has been reduced to 11 and the composition has changed as a result of the reduced membership. In addition, the ex-officio members have been removed from the committee and members of the Cabinet no longer sit on the Committee.
- 4.3. One of the most significant changes to the Planning Committee has been the introduction of controlled public speaking. This was first introduced at the meeting in July 2017 and since that date the process has been monitored, including any feedback received from Councillors and third parties. Since its introduction, a number of changes have been introduced in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing, as follows:
  - Digital clock has been introduced to assist speakers keeping track of time.
  - The time allocated to speakers has been equalised, i.e. applicant, objector and Ward Councillor all have five minutes each.
  - Speakers are called forward to sit at the designated table one at a time (when public speaking was first introduced, all speakers sat at table together, feedback was received to the effect that this could be intimidating to the people speaking).

- 4.4. An updated version of the public speaking protocol, incorporating the changes which have been made, is attached as **Appendix 3**. The changes to the protocol relate to the equalisation of the allocated time for speaking, with all parties having a maximum of five minutes.
- 4.5. As part of this review of the changes, Councillors were invited to submit comments on the changes that have been introduced and the following is a summary of the feedback received:
- a. Changes have been mainly positive, working well – the change of name and absence of ex-officio members.
  - b. Start time works but may be a struggle for those who work full time.
  - c. The reduced membership is more debatable. Maybe membership should mostly proportionately reflect the population distribution and an even geographic spread. Interested members of the public may see that some local knowledge is relevant.
  - d. Should Parish Council have right to speak although this may present an imbalance for West Bridgford – Local Area Forum could perhaps be treated same as Parish Council.
  - e. Some people have commented that they have received information about the meeting too late.
  - f. Do not agree that Planning Committee should primarily deal with strategic matters – is this not the role of the Local Development Framework group?
  - g. The introduction of public speaking has gone well.
  - h. All speakers well briefed prior to the meeting on what to expect and the countdown clock makes everything visibly fair.
  - i. Wise to avoid any cross examination or questioning of them by officers and Committee members.
  - j. Most speakers have not needed their full time slot and nobody has had to be cut off.
  - k. Changes to protocol have been readily accepted by Committee members as fair and sensible – equalising the speaking time, with a special procedure for handling big applications – these changes should now be given official status.
  - l. Presentations have been very helpful in clarifying issues.
  - m. Down side is that deliberations on applications are taking longer.

- n. Where an application site is in one Ward but may affect an adjacent Ward, there should be provision for an adjacent Ward Councillor to speak at Committee.
  - o. The clock may be daunting to somebody who is not used to public speaking and may inhibit proper delivery of a presentation – is this a legal formality?
  - p. Question whether Councillors should be a maximum time for councillors to speak in the debate, say 15 minutes? Despite efforts of Chairman to control the length of time councillors speak, on occasions some Councillors have spoken for 20 to 25 minutes.
- 4.6. The feedback to date from members of the public and Councillors confirms that the introduction of public speaking has been a positive change and has not in itself made a significant difference to the length of the meetings. There are a number of the comments above which require some response/clarification.
- 4.7. The use of the countdown clock is not a legal requirement; however, when undertaking research prior to the introduction of public speaking, it was apparent that the use of a clock or some form of light system to alert speakers to the available time was not uncommon with other authorities that operate public speaking. There have been no other concerns raised about the use of the clock.
- 4.8. The issue of the facility for Parish/Town Councils to speak at committee has been raised previously. All interested parties who have commented on a planning application receive notification when the application is due to be considered by the Planning Committee and are given the opportunity to register to speak. The Parish/Town Council, if objecting to an application, can register to speak as the objector. The exception to this, as set out in the protocol, would be where different measures are adopted for large/complex applications, as was the case when the committee considered the application for land south of Clifton and a specific slot was allocated for Parish Council(s) to speak.
- 4.9. The issue of multiple Councillors speaking on an application, particularly in a multi Councillor Ward, has been discussed previously. To date, when a Councillor has spoken from a multi Councillor Ward, they have, on occasions, made it clear that they were also speaking on behalf of the other Councillors from the Ward. This approach is also considered to be appropriate when a site may have an impact on an adjacent ward, by reason of scale and/or proximity to the ward boundary. Alternatively, in this instance, the Ward Councillor and adjacent Ward Councillor could share 5 minutes, perhaps at the discretion of the Chairman.
- 4.10. There is a suggestion that the new arrangements have resulted in deliberations on applications taking longer. A suggestion has also been made that the members of the Committee could be limited on the length of

time they speak during the debate. Ultimately it is the role of the Chairman to manage the meeting and, whilst not stifling debate, to avoid repetition and discussion of matters which are not material to the consideration of the application. There is also the opportunity for members of the Committee to raise questions/points of clarification with officers in advance of the meeting to avoid a protracted debate with points of clarification/questions being raised at the meeting.

- 4.11. It was not intended that the Committee should only deal with strategic matters, although there should be more of a focus of strategic issues. The Peer Review attended a Planning Committee during their visit and the final report contains the observation that, *“It was clear to us that at least two members of the committee were clearly representing their ward interests only...”* The role of the Planning Committee is to consider applications on a Borough wide basis, and to take decisions in line with planning policy and material considerations, operating strategically and it should not be parochial.
- 4.12. At the present time, it is not proposed to make further changes to the Planning Committee, and in particular to public speaking, although this does not preclude changes being considered and introduced at a later date. In the interest of expediency, it is considered that minor changes to the public speaking protocol should be delegated to the Executive Manager – Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing and Chairman of the Planning Committee.

## **5. Risk and Uncertainties**

None.

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1. Finance**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Future resource decisions will be considered as part of future budget reporting and consideration of the Council’s broader Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **6.2. Legal**

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

### **6.3. Corporate Priorities**

The delivery of high performing planning and growth services supports all three of the Council’s corporate priorities of ‘delivering economic growth to ensure a sustainable, prosperous and thriving local economy’, ‘maintaining and enhancing our residents quality of life’ and ‘transforming the Council to enable the delivery of efficient high quality services.

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<b>Background papers Available for Inspection:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices (if any):</b>	<b>Appendix 1</b> – Planning Peer Challenge final report dated 14 March 2017 <b>Appendix 2</b> – Action Plan <b>Appendix 3</b> – Public Speaking Protocol



Planning Improvement Peer Challenge

**Rushcliffe Borough Council**

On site February 15th – 17th 2017

Final Report March 14th 2017



**Rushcliffe**  
Borough Council

## **1.0 Executive Summary**

**1.1** The Council's planning service performs well on many indicators and is valued by its customers and users. Developers and agents particularly appreciated the accessibility of planning officers and stated that the service was good to deal with. Speed of deciding planning decisions is good.

**1.2** Delegated officer decision making at 94 per cent is high and is in line with the best performing councils. The planning service enables a wide range of development on the ground including new public buildings and conservation of listed buildings for new uses. Quality of all planning decision making measured by appeals upheld, is generally good although performance on this measure declined in the last year.

**1.3** Opportunities exist to improve public engagement at the development management committee. We list a number of key recommendations in section 2 including the introduction of public speaking. To signal a refocus of the committee on strategic decision-making we suggest renaming the development control committee to the planning Committee. Getting the committee members involved in earlier discussions on major schemes also offers potential to improve the local acceptability of development, increase efficiency and shape future development.

**1.4** Growth is clearly important to the future of the Borough and prioritised in the corporate plan. Through the duty to cooperate, significantly higher housing growth than previously experienced in Rushcliffe is required to meet the needs of the wider Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire housing market area. The local plan (core strategy): part 1 allocates six strategic housing sites for the majority of the 13,150 houses needed. All these have significant infrastructure requirements, in particular highway improvements.

**1.5** The Council continues to be proactive in unlocking the major housing sites using planning powers, partnership working, community leadership and economic growth funding bids. It is achieving particular success in attracting Growth Fund money to fund upfront infrastructure and working with Nottinghamshire County Council and Highways England on planning strategic highway works. It has achieved success at Edwalton, especially in using its development management powers in a creative way.

**1.6** Present house building numbers match identified need. But the delivery trajectory for housing numbers falls considerably from 2018. This is a major concern for the Council, especially as the annual housing target shows a sharp increase at the same time. The Council only has a 3.4 year housing land supply against a 5 year requirement. Due to this, house builders are already making predatory applications in non-sustainable areas of Rushcliffe. At a recent appeal for houses in a non-allocated area, a Planning Inspector has recognised the efforts of the Council to stimulate housing. This forms the basis of a good 'defensive' strategy to support the aims of the adopted core strategy.

**1.7** The Council's efforts to speed up housing development are wide ranging and good building blocks are in place. But we offer some recommendations to ensure that it is



maximising its internal and partnership efforts. These include increasing partnership resources through joint working, especially with the Local Economic Partnership (LEP). The Council must also ensure unrelenting focus on using its internal resources, including its planning staff and strategic growth board, to drive growth.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

### **2.1 Planning Committee**

Ensure the Committee focuses its capacity on decision-making in the strategic interests of the Borough as a whole by ensuring the committee primarily focuses on those applications which are of major importance or of significance to the area, by:

- introducing a filter into the decision making process to ensure that the committee deal with the most appropriate applications:
- ensuring that ward councillors provide sound planning reasons, supported by planning policy, when asking for decisions to be taken by committee (could be in the form of a template): and
- ensuring that all councillors who serve on the committee understand their role and when acting as a ward member ensure that they remove themselves from the committee and do not take part in the decision making process.

Review the protocols and guidance for the existing development control committee including;:

- calling it the Planning Committee to emphasise its strategic role;
- ensuring it primarily deals with strategic planning decisions;
- introducing controlled public speaking and better management of time at the planning committee meetings (for councillors, public speakers and ward members);
- removing ex officio roles;
- reducing its size;
- changing the timing/length of meetings;
- revising seating arrangements for better visibility, accountability and audibility;
- considering introducing webcasting once public speaking has bedded down; and

- considering member briefings in advance of committee to address issues that can prolong committee meetings and adversely affect the reputation of the Council.

Ensure that members of the planning committee receive bespoke training including:

- devising a programme of training (agreed by members) at the start of the year;
- detailed induction and minimum 2 year refreshers; and
- focus on understanding policy, material considerations and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

## **2.2 Resources**

Review development management and planning policy resources to ensure these are directed to delivering strategic growth through a greater focus on adoption of Part 2 of the Local Plan and the “major major” planning applications including reviewing whether;

- existing development management resources are aligned with the current needs of the Council in terms of a focus on growth and major applications (including a review of processes, systems, reporting and performance management);
- existing planning policy resources are aligned with the need to deliver on a robust local plan part 2; and
- the service understands the demand, volumes and types of work flowing into the department and that resources available are set up optimally to process and make good quality, timely decisions. In other words do the small applications currently take up a disproportionate amount of the time available and are planning policy staff spending too much time on other matters?

## **2.3 Support quicker implementation of growth:**

- use programme management to take an overview of the strategic sites and have flexibility to switch resources between different teams and different sites to facilitate the delivery of a pipeline of development;
- use a 'development team' approach to focus on the key barriers to delivery (include outside agencies where necessary) on key sites such as Gamston and South Clifton – and ensure close strategic working with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils;
- explore the offer from the Local Enterprise Partnership to become more involved in the delivery of housing growth in the Borough. Work with the Chair of Joint Planning Advisory Board (JPAB) to refocus its work on the delivery of the local

plan – especially its allocated housing sites, as these are necessary to deliver the “sub-regional” housing need and not just Rushcliffe’s;

- concentrate planning policy resources on the preparation and adoption on the local plan part 2 so that smaller, easier to develop sites, can be released to ease the five year housing land supply problems in the medium term. There is a growing risk to the plan led approach if this is not adopted within a short period of time; and
- build a “defensive strategy” based on the delivery that has already taken place in the Borough to use at “predatory appeals”. However this approach will only work if the local plan part 2 is adopted quickly.

## **2.4 Strategic Growth Board**

Examine opportunities for the current strategic growth board to develop or support creation of a ‘strategic projects delivery board’ that can bring together all key public sector players – principally the City and County Councils; Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Highways England to maximise key partner energy and finance.

## **3.0 Background and scope of the peer**

**3.1** This report is a summary of the findings of a planning improvement peer challenge organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) in cooperation with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and carried out by its trained peers. Peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector. They are improvement orientated and are tailored to meet individual councils’ need. Indeed they are designed to complement and add value to a council’s own performance and improvement focus. They help planning services review what they are trying to achieve; how they are going about it; what they are achieving; and what they need to improve.

**3.2** The peer challenge involves an assessment against a framework for a local authority planning function which explores:

- **Vision and leadership** - how the authority demonstrates high quality leadership to integrate spatial planning within corporate working to support delivery of corporate objectives;
- **Community engagement** – how the authority understands its community leadership role and community aspirations. Then how the authority uses spatial planning to deliver community aspirations;
- **Management** - the effective use of skills and resources to achieve value for money, accounting for workload demands, ensuring capacity and managing the associated risks to deliver the authority’s spatial vision;

- **Partnership engagement** – how the authority has planned its work with partners to balance priorities and resources to deliver agreed priorities; and
- **Achieving outcomes** - how the authority and other partners are delivering sustainable development outcomes for their area.

**3.3** In addition as part of the peer challenge, Rushcliffe asked us to look at the following key areas:

- decision making in Development Control, including the balance of delegations and pragmatism and scrutiny within the decision making process;
- public and member engagement within the process of decision making. Current processes evaluated and advice given on the opportunity to increase public engagement and transparency, including public speaking, recording and filming. (This in the context of the council moving into a new office building);
- development control support for the Growth agenda – in particular an assessment of current council capacity, capability and resourcing in relation to working with developers, land owners and other local authorities to deliver current permissions within major sites; and
- methods available to leverage quicker development to meet the five year housing land supply obligations.

**3.4** We agreed with the Council that our on-site feedback and report would be grouped around the three key themes of:

- development control decision making;
- development control support for the growth agenda; and
- supporting quicker implementation of housing growth.

**3.5** Peers were:

- Mark Sturgess - Chief Operating Officer, West Lindsey District Council
- Cllr Andrew Proctor - Leader of the Council, Broadland District Council
- Karen Syrett - Place Strategy Manager, Colchester Borough Council
- Robert Hathaway - Peer Challenge Manager, LGA Associate

**3.6** PAS and the LGA where possible will support councils with implementing the recommendations as part of the Council's improvement programme. It is recommended that the council discuss ongoing PAS support, including the cost of it, with Stephen Barker, Principal Consultant at [stephen.barker@local.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.barker@local.gov.uk). The LGA is currently discussing

support with the Council in relation to officer/member training. A range of other support from the LGA – some of this might be at no cost, some subsidised and some fully charged is available <http://www.local.gov.uk>. For more information contact Mark Edgell [Mark.Edgell@local.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Edgell@local.gov.uk).

**3.7** As part of the peer challenge impact assessment and its evaluation, PAS or the LGA may get in touch in 6-12 months to find out how the Council is implementing the recommendations and what beneficial impact there has been.

**3.8** The team appreciated the welcome and hospitality provided by Rushcliffe Borough Council and partners and the openness in which discussions were held. The team would like to thank everybody they met during the process for their time and contribution.

## **4.0 Development Management Decision Making**

### **Performance**

**4.1** The Council benefits from a stable, cohesive and well managed planning team. We met a majority of the approximately 20 staff involved in development management, planning policy, enforcement and specialist support and found an extremely well-motivated and committed group of professionals. It was clear from our interviews that there was a strong team approach to facilitating a wide range of new buildings, open space and infrastructure in the Borough. Through this there is also a good positive working relationship between councillors and officers.

**4.2** Planning staff told us that the Council's recent move to a purpose built building at Rushcliffe Arena was already allowing even greater integration with supporting services including economic development and strategic housing. This very modern new working environment providing co-location of officers with good accessibility to managers, offers strong potential for even greater joint working to meet the Council's Growth agenda.

**4.3** The Council receives approximately 1,200 planning applications per year and up to 400 related submissions for discharge of planning conditions and requests for non-material amendments. It also deals with up to 1,000 preliminary enquiries each year. Based on a range of measures often used to assess the quality of development decision-making – Rushcliffe performs well. We found a good focus on performance management with appropriate scrutiny and support provided by an experienced service manager. Executive management team provide further management support through a service-wide 'performance clinic' held every six to eight weeks.

**4.4** In terms of speed of decision-making the Council has successfully focused its resources and performance monitoring on major applications. In 2016 performance rose significantly with the majority of quarter periods showing that the Council has dealt with over 80 per cent of 'major' applications within 8 or 13 weeks or an agreed extended period. This provides a rolling two year average of 65 per cent which is good performance. In

relation to 'minor' and 'other' applications, the service recorded a two year rolling average performance at 80 per cent against the 8 week target. This further demonstrates a good focus on speed as part of a quality decision making process.

**4.5** When measured by appeal decisions, the Council is broadly in line with national averages. This is despite a rise in lost appeals over recent years partly as a result of committee overturns. In 2014/5 the Council won 87 per cent of appeals made against its planning decisions, dropping to 70 per cent in 2015/6 and standing at 62 per cent for the first three quarters of 2016/7. Overturns of officer recommendations by development control committee for the past three years have hovered around 15 per cent (for example in 2016, 14 out of 99 decisions). Overall these are relatively low numbers. We are also aware that the Council has a good system of reporting the results of appeals back to the development control committee to assist learning.

#### **Customer access**

**4.6** We spoke to a range of planning agents, architects and other customers who had recently submitted planning applications to the Council or who had regular ongoing engagement with the planning service. We found general widespread support from customers who cited good accessibility to officers, and a strong commitment to finding solutions, as strengths of the service. The Council has enhanced its duty officer presence at its community contact centre in West Bridgford town centre to make it easier for the public and planning customers to make contact face to face. Architects and planning agents also commented on the Council's willingness to accept contemporary design solutions. We saw for ourselves examples of where such an approach had worked well in the area for example the new Medical Centre and adjoining Cadet Centre at West Bridgford.

**4.7** The Council makes very good use of its partnership with its town and parish councils to engage with them over planning issues. We attended a town and parish council forum where the feedback on the performance of Rushcliffe's planning service was generally good. Again the accessibility of officers was highlighted for praise along with their willingness to meet to discuss issues and concerns, including on site.

**4.8** Parish and town councils expressed concern about the lack of feedback on their comments on planning applications. This is not dissimilar to the situation in most other parts of England with planning services not having the capacity to complete the 'feedback loop'. But it is the case that all officer delegated and committee reports include and assess the town and parish comments and all officer and committee reports are accessible on the Council's website. It could help to use the annual town and parish council forum to discuss say one main development management issue a year to help provide a better shared understanding of opportunities and constraints on key issues. From our experience on other peer challenges at rural councils, invariably accessibility, affordable housing and design in a rural context are always hotly debated issues!

**4.8** In terms of public engagement a minority of ward and parish councillors we spoke to were concerned that the service did not always make sure that all adjoining neighbours were consulted over planning applications. While we did not have time to undertake an audit of planning applications the Council assured us that on all applications it goes beyond the statutory minimum requirements and all neighbours are consulted. We were also not given any firm examples nor were there any adverse Ombudsman findings on such matters.

#### **Delegation and Committee decision making**

**4.9** The Council's scheme of delegation is clear and results in the committee deciding less than 6 per cent of the planning applications (typically 70-100 applications) in any one year. Committee decisions cover a wide range from the area's largest residential, commercial and industrial schemes through to householder applications and discharges of conditions. In line with the scheme of delegation within the Council's Constitution, ward councillors can request that any matter comes before the committee if the officer proposes a contrary recommendation. Ward councillors do not need to indicate what planning reasons or material considerations they feel support the need for the application to be decided by committee.

**4.10** The committee meets every four weeks in a modern room at Rushcliffe Arena and comprises 15 members and 2 ex officio members (leader and deputy leader). While the main Council offices are not located in the town centre they are on a bus route and co-located with one of its leisure centres and car parking is conveniently located. We attended a committee meeting and found that accessibility at the venue was excellent which supports public decision making being accessible to all.

**4.11** The development control committee starts its meetings at 7pm and we were told regularly goes on past 10pm. The meeting we attended contained seven applications with no 'major major' applications but three major applications. This meeting lasted until 10.50pm. We feel that such a late finish does not support active public engagement or full consideration of applications which are later in the agenda.

**4.12** We found the officers' committee reports for members to be clear and concise. Officer presentations at the committee set out clear evidence supporting the report recommendations and customer and public engagement was helped by three easily viewable large screens that showed site location, plans and photos. Audibility was something of a problem but we were assured that this was a teething issue as it was only the second time that the committee had met at its new venue. However, the seating arrangements meant that the members of the development control committee had their backs to the area in which the public and customers sat and there were no name plates to know who is who. This lack of visibility negatively impacts on the ability of customers and the public to feel engaged in the meeting. We also considered that having ward members who are not members of the committee mixed in with committee members did not allow the public to easily understand who was taking the decisions.

**4.13** The Council asked for our views on whether the committee should introduce public speaking. We strongly advocate the introduction of controlled public speaking to enhance public engagement and ownership of the planning decision making process. This would bring the Council in line with the majority of planning decision making committees in England. We discussed public speaking with members of the planning committee and other councillors and found a majority in favour of it. We recognise that the Council would need to strictly control protocols around public speaking. We recommend that the Council introduces public speaking as part of a wider package of improvements that we itemise later in the report designed to support stronger engagement and efficiency.

**4.14** Listening to the committee we were concerned that there was a blurring of some roles and responsibilities of members. It was clear to us that at least two members of the committee were clearly representing their ward interests only and appeared to be pre-determined to vote in a certain way before hearing the views of the committee. We were told that what we saw and heard was not a 'one off'. This suggests a misunderstanding among at least some members of the committee in relation to their role. The role and responsibility of members of the committee is to take decisions on behalf of the whole of the Borough in line with planning policy and material considerations. It is not to act as local ward councillors when taking decisions on applications in their wards.

**4.15** Members of the committee told us that they would value consistent refresher training during the election cycles. We also think that members would benefit from a stronger understanding of the opportunities and constraints offered by national and local policy in relation to technical areas such as highway considerations and rural exception sites. This could take the form of informal briefings in the already allocated time slots for training before committee starts.

**4.16** In overall terms we consider that the committee needs to become more strategic in its outlook. We suggest that the committee refocuses its energy and expertise on primarily those strategic planning decisions that are the most important for ensuring the long-term prosperity and success for all of its communities. In this way we want to encourage the Council to see a refreshed and renamed 'planning committee' as the primary strategic planning decision making body for Rushcliffe. Our recommendations are therefore designed to help committee focus as far as possible on strategic planning decisions, improve efficiency and increase public engagement and clarity.

**4.17** In more detail and in order to support the committee in refocusing its energy and capacity we suggest that the Council considers:

- changing the name of the committee to signal a move away from 'development control' to a more forward looking and enabling 'planning committee';
- reviewing the protocols in relation to how planning applications are referred to committee and introduce appropriate 'hurdles' to ensure that committee's time is focused on the most important applications for the Borough;



- reducing the number of members on committee to concentrate decision making on fewer better trained members thereby increasing expertise and reducing potential ward member conflict. We suggest removing the ex officio members and decreasing membership to 9 to 11 members;
- rearranging the layout so that members of the committee are clearly visible to the public and planning customers along with suitably sized name plates and allocate a separate speaking area for ward councillors and public speakers;
- reviewing committee protocols to ensure that members of the committee wishing to speak as ward councillors, stand down from committee and not vote and speak from a separate location and are time limited to no more than 5 minutes (the same time limit and allocation to apply to ward councillors not on committee);
- reviewing committee protocols to allow public speaking limiting speakers to no more than 5 minutes for or against the proposal;
- reviewing the start time of the committee to make it as easy as possible for members of the public and planning customers to engage with decision making and to aim to achieve a more consistent end time (we would suggest 10pm as a maximum) to support officer and member capacity and well-being;
- developing a training plan for committee members that allows for high quality induction and refresher events including effective decision making based on planning policy and material considerations; and
- introducing member briefings on major or controversial applications to address issues at an early stage and avoid protracted discussion at committee meetings.

**4.18** Any new protocol would need to ensure that under exceptional circumstances the chair of committee in association with relevant officers could vary the process.

## **5.0 Development Management Support for the Growth Agenda**

### **Vision and Aims**

**5.1** The Council's political priority for growth of the area is clearly articulated in its corporate strategy and supporting objectives and plans. We found high levels of support for the adopted local plan part 1: core strategy. This clearly provides important direction for the development management service. We have more to say in section 6 in relation to planning policy.

**5.2** Clear service aims and targets direct the work of the development management service and we found a clear 'golden thread' linking corporate priorities to delivery. Councillors and corporate leadership team exhibited a strong commitment and responsibility towards the planning service recognising its central role in delivering growth

and sustainable and resilient communities. Since 2010 the Council has protected its planning service from significant cuts. This is not the case in other councils where cuts of up to 50 per cent are not uncommon. The Council therefore demonstrates a strong understanding of the central role and importance of planning to enable development. Enabling development and growth is vital to provide local sources of revenue in the form of council tax, business rates and new homes bonus given the demise of Government grant post 2020.

### **Added Value and Performance**

**5.3** The service has enabled and added value to a number of developments that have supported the growth of the Borough. While the Council is rightly concerned about progress on some of its major strategic allocations (see section 6) it was clear from our site visits that housebuilding is underway and that the Council is being proactive. For example, the development management service has been pivotal in enabling housing development and large supporting highway improvements at the Edwalton strategic housing allocation of around 1,500 dwellings. Here significant viability issues threatened the very development of the site. Working with the landowner's planning agent, the service developed an implementation and delivery framework document. This document acted as the 'glue' that allowed the site to come forward as a series of multiple full applications for 929 houses. Work has commenced on site and includes early substantial highway infrastructure.

**5.4** The service has been successful in securing significant funding through section 106 agreements. Since November 2014 the Council has received £5.3 million for community benefits including educational and leisure facilities, bus transport, highways and cycling/footpaths improvements. These community benefits have made the impact of development acceptable in planning terms and are vital in spreading the benefits of growth more widely among Rushcliffe's communities. Less successful has been the growth in new affordable housing units that amounts to some 180 over the last three years and lies below the Council's target. It will be important for the Council to ensure it achieves the correct balance between enabling development and facilitating the delivery of affordable housing. The Council advised us that it is at the early stages of considering setting up an arm's length housing company. This offers potential to increase the number of affordable housing units in the Borough.

**5.5** The service adopts a holistic approach to growth in support of the corporate strategy and local plan. This includes a clear commitment to not only enabling housing growth but also employment land, protection and improvement of public space and improved supporting infrastructure. We saw a clear emphasis on integration with planning policy and economic development officers and external partners to deliver high quality places. At Cotgrave the service has worked with the landowner and Homes and Communities Agency to deliver 470 dwellings on the former colliery site and employment units on adjacent land. The planning applications have led to additional funding, through

community benefits, to support regeneration of the town centre including a multi public service centre and the refurbishment of the older shopping precinct.

**5.6** We saw and heard of numerous examples of other developments that were enabled by the development management service. These included public buildings, sheltered housing and the sensitive reuse of listed buildings including a new £300 million replacement rehabilitation facility for service personnel at Stanford Hall. Developers, agents and customers told us that the Council adopted a positive and pragmatic approach to development. For example they said that in relation the Council was willing to listen to credible viability evidence in the interests of getting development off the ground on the stalled sites.

**5.7** We also found a strong recognition of the enabling role of the service and not an overzealous focus on regulation and control. In 2015/16 the Council approved 1,035 of the 1,134 planning applications submitted (91 per cent). Saying 'yes' to development proposals clearly supports building and growth in appropriate locations. It also avoids having to refuse an application and then having to deal with it as a 'free go' if resubmitted within a year. This effectively 'costs' the service in unrecoverable staff time.

**5.8** However, the Council's approval rates for major development falls below the level of the best councils and is an area that the service could investigate further. In 2015/16 the Council approved 42 out of 52 major applications (81 per cent). Some councils are able to achieve approval rates of 95-97 per cent for major applications. It is important that the service reviews why it is saying 'no' and examines any trends or weaknesses. Areas that the service could look at include how the development industry responds to pre-application advice, the use of Planning Performance Agreements, earlier involvement of committee members at scheme inception or committee members' understanding of the NPPF (this links back to the training point made in 4.15).

#### **Earlier Engagement with Councillors**

**5.9** Committee members and ward councillors told us that they saw benefits in being involved much earlier in major planning applications. Members told us in many instances they thought they were involved too late in the planning process leaving them feeling they were in reactive mode. We recommend as part of a re-examination of the new committee's focus that it uses pre-application meetings, such as strategic planning groups, to act as a forum where ward councillors and the chair and vice chair of committee can meet with officers (and possibly developers/local agents at an early stage in the development of major projects.) Such forums offer clear potential to encourage positive partnerships on the scheme itself as well as a place to discuss issues in a more informal and non-decision making setting. This could on occasion involve the public as well to support more active early public engagement.

**5.10** Earlier engagement with proposed schemes would enable the chair of the committee to more effectively work with officers in developing a clear forward plan for major applications to be discussed in advance of going to committee for a formal decision. Early

opportunities for committee member engagement would aid officers in identifying issues that may need more information at committee. Portsmouth operates such a scheme and charges the developer/applicant £1,600 as part of a pre application advice service.

## **Resources**

**5.11** We were surprised to learn that the service deals with around 1,000 requests for planning advice, including pre-application advice and householder enquiries, every year. Compared with many other similar councils this seems a very large number. For example at Colchester Borough Council the planning service has 1,800 applications and deals with between 250-300 requests for pre- application advice. Colchester also only has a part time duty officer so one might expect its figure to be higher. While the Council introduced charging for pre application advice on larger applications in 2010, it only introduced charging for householder advice in September and at a cost of £50. While this has reduced the number of pre application requests the Council needs to keep this figure under review to ensure that it is set at an appropriate level, both in terms of managing demand plus cost recovery.

**5.12** We recognise the importance of giving good quality pre-application advice. This also provides a good source of income to the Council to support its planning service. However, we recommend that the service reviews its pre-application advice service to both manage demand and free up more officer time to focus on dealing with strategic planning applications. And also any necessary development management work that supports their implementation.

**5.13** Without prejudging the outcome of any review we could envisage a possible option whereby the Council increased charges, especially in relation to high worth developments such as executive housing and commercial schemes. When discussing the Council's pre application service with developers and agents they told us that their clients would be prepared to pay higher costs for a premier service. The Council may therefore want to consider a sliding scale of charges based on the scale of development. If, as we suspect, a high number of pre-application requests are for house holder advice, it will be important that these do not deflect significantly from dealing with major applications. As with all such decisions, the service needs to make sure it prioritises its corporate and service aims.

## **6.0 Supporting Quicker Implementation of Growth**

### **Context**

**6.1** We found good political support and ownership of the strategic planning policies for Rushcliffe which cover 2011-2028. This support is not to be underestimated given that the adopted local plan part 1 (2014) allocates 13,150 houses (a 28 per cent increase and growth in the previous plan period) and 4,400 jobs to the Borough given its proximity to the main urban area of Nottingham. This high number of houses is planned to serve the needs of the wider housing market area and to locate houses close to where most new jobs are

to be created. Of the required housing, 58 per cent (7,650 units) is to be built in 3 sustainable urban extensions at South Clifton, Edwalton and between Gamston and Tollerton. The remaining 42 per cent (5,500 units) are allocated beyond the built-up area at 5 key settlements including Bingham, Cotgrave and East Leake.

### **Housing Land Supply**

**6.2** At March 31 2016 the Council's housing land supply was 3.4 years of deliverable sites between 2016-21. This shortfall is principally due to all but one of the 6 strategic sites being behind the planned trajectory of delivery of 4,640 homes by 2021. The Council's best estimates are that the 6 sites will deliver 2,500 by 2021 although it recognises that even this may be an over estimate. This demands a most challenging 4 fold annual increase in the trajectory of housing delivery. And this on difficult strategic sites requiring very expensive advance infrastructure, complex legal agreements and negotiations between land owners and house builders. The Council also backloaded its housing trajectory and by 2018 will need to deliver 1,300 units per year, compared to the existing target of under 500. The challenge should not be underestimated.

### **Proactivity and Delivery**

**6.3** The Council and its partners have already invested considerable effort in progressing the large strategic sites with good success. A Planning Inspector recently commented when refusing an appeal for houses at Ashlockton that ... 'Considerable effort is being expended by the Council to make progress' on the 6 strategic sites. The Planning Inspectorate recognise that private sector house building has been 'boosted significantly' with the most recent annual completions being some 60 per cent above the preceding 6 year period. Annual house building is up to 450 units. Indeed housing delivery is ahead of schedule when measured against the first 5 years of the core strategy with 1,561 dwellings built against an anticipated 1,268.

**6.4** We commend the Council for achieving this success in a difficult environment. We discussed at section 5.3 the example at Edwalton but there are others. At Cotgrave the whole housing scheme is to be completed in advance of expectations and place making is supported by £3m for town centre regeneration from the Growth Fund.

**6.5** At Bingham the Council is showing good community leadership in seeking to drive the Crown Estate into action to bring forward the housing site. Here the Council is being proactive in working with the landowner to identify a developer, modify phasing and alleviate flood risk. In an attempt to get things moving on site the Council has even secured a contribution of £2.5m from the LEP's Growth Fund.

**6.6** At RAF Newton the Council is working proactively with a house builder and landowner on viability, phasing and infrastructure. It is currently bidding for £2.3m from Highway England's Growth and Housing Fund' to assist in delivering a footbridge over the A46 trunk Road. Without this, work cannot commence on housing.

**6.7** One of the main infrastructure improvements required before the development of housing sites is the A52/A6060 strategic highway. The Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Highways England have developed a Memorandum of Understanding that assesses junction improvements required in relation to housing numbers on each strategic site. This provides greater clarity to the development industry and guidance to the planning service in its development management role.

**6.8** To support wider growth the Council has established an economic growth team. One of its roles is to identify and bid for available grant funding to assist in the delivery of the development schemes. This has focused on supporting the funding of up front infrastructure or to kick start development schemes that have stalled.

**6.9** The Economic Growth Team works closely with the planning policy and development management teams to assist in the submission of funding bids. The Council has a good focus on ensuring that growth is not just limited to housing but includes economic growth as well. For example, it has invested £2.5m into Cotgrave, taking its total regeneration investment to over £3.5m in the town.

**6.10** It is also increasing employment sites in the locality with the construction of business units on brownfield land that will be available for rent in 2017. In pursuing its economic growth agenda, the Council secured £6.25m in Growth Deal funding to develop employment sites along the A46 corridor, in Bingham, Cotgrave and Newton. By putting the initial infrastructure in place, the Council is supporting growth in the area and this makes sites more attractive to house builders as well.

**6.11** It is clear to us that the Council is making use of its community leadership, development management and economic growth roles in proactive work with landowners and developers to overcome site constraints. Our later recommendations seek to ensure that the Council is maximising its focus and resources in this area.

## **Local Plan Part 2**

**6.12** It is important for the Council to focus and commit sufficient resources to adopting its Local Plan Part 2 as quickly as possible. This Plan will set out the non-strategic development allocations for the Borough. This will play an important role in increasing the housing land supply and promoting building on smaller housing sites. The Council recognises that progress on the Local Plan Part 2 has been slower than it had planned for. It had initially targeted adoption for 2016, which it revised to 2017 and it is now unlikely to achieve this before summer 2018.

**6.13** A lack of good progress has slowed the potential release of housing sites at Keyworth, Radcliffe on Trent and Ruddington that are all in the Green Belt. The provision of a greater stock of smaller to medium size housing allocations should boost the short to medium term housing delivery. This would help to partially offset the trajectory shortfall arising from the delays in delivering the large strategic allocations. The quicker the adoption of local plan part 2, the quicker the approval and delivery on smaller housing

sites. Also the quicker the adoption of the Plan, the stronger the 'defensive' position of the Council becomes to resist predatory housing applications on non-sustainable sites.

**6.14** To speed up progress on planning policy will demand sufficient capacity and focus. While existing planning service resources could well be sufficient in a 'steady state' the context for planning service delivery in Rushcliffe is complex and challenging. This is particularly the case for the relatively small planning policy team of 5 staff who presently deal with matters such as Community Infrastructure Levy, property gazetteer, assisting strategic housing and street naming. This effectively takes the planning policy resource to 3.7 full time equivalents.

**6.15** Without prejudging any solution the Council could consider short term additional capacity from neighbouring councils through the JPAB or the private sector. In discussions with the current Chair of JPAB this appeared to be a feasible option. There is also the opportunity to second people from other teams into the Planning Policy team for a short period.

#### **Development Management**

**6.16** In development management, the Council may want to ensure that it utilises staff with the appropriate skills to increase the capacity of joint delivery teams to promote stalled strategic sites. We also feel that the Council needs to ensure that its managers and staff are consistently focused on those tasks and planning applications that add most value to the corporate priority of growth. We say this as we were surprised, for example, that principal planning officers are 'validating' new applications as matter of routine. This does not appear to us to be the best use of their expertise.

**6.17** It will also be important for the service to ensure that sufficient senior resources are focused on deciding 'major major' applications and supporting their implementation. The Planning Advisory Service's productivity review is one option that the Council could consider to explore whether it is allocating its resources to best advantage. This would review existing processes, systems, reporting and performance management. It would also assess the extent to which the service understands the demand, volumes and type of work flowing into the service and that resources available are set up optimally to process good quality and timely decisions.

#### **Partnership Funding and Support**

**6.18** We encourage the Council to maximise the potential of partnership work with neighbouring authorities and with the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP - covering Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire). We provide further detail below on a number of areas that we consider the Council should examine further.

**6.19** We see potential for a new or revitalised role for the Greater Nottingham Joint Planning Advisory Board (JPAB) who have worked together well on the alignment of planning policy work across the Greater Nottingham area. With councillor and senior officer experience already in place, JPAB is well placed to strengthen its priority of housing

delivery. It could build on its successful bid of £850k grant from the Government's 'Large Sites and Housing Zones Capacity Fund' that has already funded a part time partnership manager post and commissioned specialist activities to accelerate housing delivery. An opportunity exists for JPAB to encourage and co-ordinate the use of a rise in planning fees across the Nottingham area (advocated in the Government's Housing White Paper) to add capacity to its work.

**6.20** We would encourage Rushcliffe and the JPAB to learn from the way that the public and private sectors are tackling similar issues of growth in Kent and Medway. Here the County Council, Kent Developers Group, Kent Housing Group and Kent Planning Officers Group have developed a protocol to encourage continued collaborative working between all those involved in delivering growth in Kent. All parties agree to provide the appropriate level of resources to meet the identified need. In some instances this means developers providing financial support to authorities to buy in additional resources via Planning Performance Agreements, to assist in the efficient management of larger and more complex schemes. Charges for pre-application advice will be sufficient to support a high quality pre-application advice service.

**6.21** The recent change in the strategic objectives of the D2N2 LEP presents a clear opportunity to enhance growth. The LEP has broadened its strategic objectives beyond jobs and skills to include a focus on supporting delivery of the 77,000 houses needed across its area. We spoke to the chairman and chief executive of the LEP who recognised that the time was right for a 'new conversation' between local councils and other partners in relation to housing delivery. Again JPAB may be the appropriate vehicle to lead such a 'new conversation' and act as strategic bidder and broker across the area. Rushcliffe would need to ensure that it used its political and executive influence to ensure that its strategic needs were clearly recognised in any capital or revenue bids.

**6.22** Strategic bids to the LEP, Government agencies such as Highways England and Homes and Community Agency and other funders would seem to chime with the Housing White Paper's focus on partnership approaches to unlocking strategic housing sites. JPAB would need to ensure that bids were very well evidenced and with a clear analysis of the issues holding back implementation. They would also need to feature strong costed partnership solutions between the private and public sectors.

**6.23** We see opportunities for stronger partnership working with Nottingham City Council, through a Memorandum of Understanding, and joint delivery team for the urban extension at South Clifton. Highway and viability issues have stalled progress of an outline application but the Council is seeking to work with the developers on a Planning Performance Agreement.

**6.24** The Council regards the strategic housing allocation between Gamston and Tollerton as its most problematic site. The site has significant infrastructure needs and various landowners do not appear to want to move at the same pace. The Council's chief executive is demonstrating good leadership in seeking to work with the chief executives at



Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council to co-ordinate a realistic and deliverable plan to enable development. We appreciate that there may be signs of renewed hope of a planning application in the coming year. If there is any further delay on a comprehensive scheme we would recommend that the Council uses its influence with its local authority partners to try and bring forward the publicly owned portions of the larger site as early development phases.

**6.25** The Council told us that it adopted bespoke management and leadership solutions in relation to progressing each of the strategic sites. This allowed for managers to be fleet of foot and resources to be flexible as required. While we recognise the value of this approach it will be important for the Council to make full use of its project delivery and project management skills to deliver the housing 'pipeline'. Such an approach will also assist in supporting the alignment of resources on strategic sites. It is also important to acknowledge that the strategic sites allocated in the local plan part 1, cannot deliver the Council's ambitious housing targets by themselves.

#### **Rushcliffe Strategic Growth Board**

**6.26** It will be important for the Council to ensure that it maximises the capacity of its new Strategic Growth Board to oversee and support the drive for major infrastructure and housing growth in Rushcliffe. We recognise that the Board is still in its infancy. But it will be important for the Leader, economic portfolio holder and others councillors on the Board to provide strategic political leadership to Growth Fund and other funding bids. We recommend that the strategic growth board is not distracted from an unrelenting focus on major growth by small scale localised improvements – however worthy the latter may be.

**6.27** We would also recommend that the strategic growth board examines the opportunity of setting up a strategic projects delivery board that can bring together all key public sector players – principally the City and County Councils; Homes and Community Agency and Highways England. This could provide strategic partnership direction for the Nottinghamshire housing market area.

## 7.0 Further Support

7.1 PAS would be happy to discuss with Rushcliffe developing a package of further support (paid for at cost). Specifically, we recommend exploring PAS support around:

- improvement planning advice;
- training for the Planning Committee. [http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas1/councillors-page/-/journal\\_content/56/332612/15306/ARTICLE](http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas1/councillors-page/-/journal_content/56/332612/15306/ARTICLE)
- [Productivity & Resource Review](http://www.pas.gov.uk/productivity-and-resource;jsessionid=292A57E7688D186B089FBB09F4AB524F.tomcat2) <http://www.pas.gov.uk/productivity-and-resource;jsessionid=292A57E7688D186B089FBB09F4AB524F.tomcat2>

7.2 There are also tools and materials available on the [PAS website](#) which can be downloaded and used for free. Some of these are listed below.

7.3 DM tools: PAS has produced a suite of materials which should help with various aspects of the DM process. The councils have already had access to support for their DM service from PAS, particularly in relation to the DM challenge kit. The resources below are available to download and use.

- [DM Challenge Toolkit](#): ideal for focusing improvement work and useful as part of a wide-ranging review or for simply making a few process changes
- [Key principles for good management](#): a series of 'key principles' for managing parts of the planning process.
- [Pre-app processes](#): PAS has a number of pre-application resources available to download and use.
- [Conditions](#): PAS has produced a best practice note on applying and discharging conditions
- [Project managing major applications](#): PAS has produced a new note about handling major applications
- [Using S106s – standard templates etc.](#)
- [Plan Making Direct Support](#)



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Action Plan – Planning peer Challenge February 2017 – Strategic Owner Executive Manager Communities – Update Jan 2018

Ref	Action	Owner	Target date	Priority	Position statement	%complete
1	<p><b>Planning Committee</b> Ensure the Committee takes strategic planning decisions for the Borough as a whole.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee changes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– seating/visibility/audibility</li> <li>– timing/length of meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>– call it the Planning Committee</li> <li>– introduce controlled public speaking</li> <li>– remove ex officio roles</li> <li>– reduce size and change composition</li> <li>– Define the role of the ward member when serving on the Committee – pre determination and pre disposition.</li> <li>– ensure it primarily</li> </ul>	<p>Executive Manager Communities</p> <p>Planning and Growth Manager/ Member Services</p> <p>Planning and Growth Manager/ Monitoring Officer (Constitution)</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>March 2017</p> <p>June 2017</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>New layout introduced and new microphone system operational for meeting in March 2017</p> <p>New start time (6.30pm) agreed June Council and in place for meeting of Planning Committee in July</p> <p>New name of Committee agreed at Council in May 2017 and implemented</p> <p>Protocol for public speaking agreed at June Council – introduced for meeting of Planning Committee in July</p> <p>Removal of Ex Officio roles agreed at May Council – immediate implementation</p> <p>Size and composition of planning Committee agreed at May Council – implemented for June Planning Committee</p>

Ref	Action	Owner	Target date	Priority	Position statement	%complete
	deals with strategic planning decisions and consider developing a 'filter'					Role of Ward Councillors agreed by council June 2017 – Ward Councillors who sit on Committee required to step down for items in their area but can register to speak. Ward Councillors not on committee can register to speak on items in their area
	– webcasting/recording	Planning and Growth Manager	Dec 2017	2	Complete audio Webcasting not currently being considered	Process for Service Manager to speak to Councillors before referring items to committee formalised  New audio/visual equipment in Council Chamber has facility to record meetings – trialled at meeting of Planning Committee on 25 January 2018 – no immediate plans to webcast meetings
	– Member training - minimum 2 yr refreshers with clear training plans	Planning and Growth Manager	Ongoing with annual review	2		Potential facilitator for half day/evening session identified – discussions ongoing with Constitutional Services



Ref	Action	Owner	Target date	Priority	Position statement	%complete
	<p>with the need to deliver on a robust local plan pt 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further develop the councils “defensive strategy” based on the delivery that has already taken place in the Borough to use at “predatory appeals”</li> </ul>					<p>(funded by HCA grant) post filled October 2017</p> <p>Graduate Planning policy Officer post created – filled October 2017 (to assist with Part 2 of Local Plan)</p>
3	<p><b>Support quicker implementation of growth:</b></p> <p>use programme management to take an overview of the strategic sites and have flexibility to switch resources to facilitate the delivery of a pipeline of development;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use a 'development team' approach to focus on the key barriers to delivery on key sites</li> <li>• Develop partnership with Local Enterprise Partnership to become more involved in the delivery of housing growth in the Borough.</li> <li>• Work with the Joint Planning Advisory Board (JPAB) to</li> </ul>	<p>Executive Manager Communities and Executive Manager Transformation</p> <p>Chief Executive,</p> <p>Executive Manager Communities,</p>	<p>June 2017</p> <p>Dec 2017</p> <p>Dec 2017</p>	<p>1</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Complete and ongoing</p> <p>Complete and ongoing</p> <p>Complete and ongoing</p>	<p>Development Teams with all interested parties initiated for Gamston and Clifton strategic sites</p> <p>Strategic Sites Delivery Officer appointed October 2017 – principal role to liaise with colleagues and external partners etc to bring forward Strategic Sites</p> <p>Ongoing discussions between Chief Executive and LEP</p> <p>Presentation on Planning Peer Challenge given to</p>

Ref	Action	Owner	Target date	Priority	Position statement	%complete
	refocus its work on the delivery of housing					JPAB Board  Planning Development Protocol developed and adopted at JPAB Board. Now being rolled out for signature to key development partners
4	<p><b>Strategic Growth Board</b></p> <p>Examine opportunities for the current strategic growth board to develop or support creation of a 'strategic projects delivery board' that can bring together all key public sector players – principally the City and County Councils; Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Highways England to maximise key partner energy and finance.</p>	Chief Executive, Executive Manager Communities, Executive Manager Transformation	July 2017	1	Complete and ongoing	<p>Regular item on Strategic Growth Board agenda covering pipeline of strategic development sites, delivery and opportunities for grant funding support.</p> <p>Representatives from Homes England, LEP and County Council and business partners on Membership</p>

## Planning Applications ... having your say

### A guide on how to speak at Planning Committee

Rushcliffe Borough Council receives around 1,400 planning applications each year. Some of these will be from an individual household wanting to improve their home with additional accommodation, a new garage or conservatory; others will be from a property developer proposing to build a new housing estate, primary school and local shops with additional open community spaces. All of the applications we receive need to be considered by our planning officers, this includes consulting people who may be affected by the application. In many cases, these planning officers can make a decision under delegated powers but around 6% of applications each year are referred to the Council's Planning Committee for a decision.

#### What is the Planning Committee?

The Planning Committee is formed of 11 Borough Councillors who make decisions on those applications referred to the Committee. These meetings take place once a month and are open to the public – dates and agendas (once they are published) can be found on our website [www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy](http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy). You can also see who is on the Planning Committee on our website.

The majority of applications are referred to the Planning Committee where:

- they have been submitted by a Borough Councillor or senior member of staff
- they demonstrate a difference of opinion between the planning officers' recommendation and the ward councillors' views as expressed during the consultation
- the ward councillor has declared an interest
- the Borough Council is the applicant.

Please note that large or complex applications may be considered differently by the Planning Committee.

#### Having your say at Planning Committee?

If you are the applicant, an objector or ward councillor (Borough Councillor for the ward in which the application is being made), and an application is to be discussed at Planning Committee in which you have an interest, you can present your views directly to the Committee. The Planning Committee agenda is available on the website (at the same address as above) a week before the meeting and it lists the applications that will be discussed at the meeting. You will be able to speak directly to the Planning Committee if you are the applicant for the application under consideration or if you are representing objectors to the application for a maximum of five minutes; or if you are the ward councillor for the ward in which the application is being made you may speak to the Committee for up to five minutes (in multi councillor wards where the views of ward councillors are different, then both viewpoints will be heard). Speakers will be heard by the Committee in the following order: Planning Officer (time unlimited), applicant, objector, and ward councillor. No cross examination of the applicant or objector will be permitted.

#### How do I register my wish to speak?

If you wish to speak at Planning Committee, you will need to contact our Constitutional Services team at [constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk) or on 0115 9148 511 with your name, address and telephone number, the application number you wish to speak about, and whether you are objecting to, or supporting the application. Requests to speak at Planning Committee must be received by 5pm on the Monday before the meeting. Only one applicant, objector and ward councillor (except in a multi councillor ward where the views of councillors differ) may speak at the Planning Committee on each application. If more than one person in each category wishes to speak, you will be asked to give us permission to share your contact details with other people wishing to speak and decide amongst yourselves who speaks at the meeting.



## What happens at the Planning Committee?

The following format is followed at each Planning Committee:

- apologies for absence from Committee members absent
- notification of any substitutions
- declarations of interest from Committee members
- minutes of the previous meeting agreed and signed.

Then the applications for consideration at this meeting are presented – for each application:

- the planning officer presents a report containing the recommendation
- opportunity for the applicant to speak
- opportunity for a representative of any objectors to speak
- opportunity for the relevant ward councillor to speak
- the Committee members will then discuss the application and take a vote
- this process will be repeated until all applications have been considered.

## What should I talk about when I speak to the Committee?

Firstly, it depends on whether you are the applicant, whether you are representing those that object to the application, or acting in your capacity as a ward councillor. All speakers must ensure that their statement only refers to planning-related issues, examples are detailed below – these are the only issues which the Committee can consider and to speak about other issues would waste the time that you have. Speakers may not address questions directly to the Committee or the planning officers present. Speakers will not generally be questioned by the Committee – in very exceptional cases the Chairman might ask you to clarify a point of fact.

## Relevant planning-related issues that can be considered by the Committee

The Committee can only take planning-related issues into account when making their decision. Therefore, you should ensure that your statement relates to material planning considerations which may include:

- Overlooking / loss of privacy
- Design / effect on appearance of area
- Access, parking, traffic, road safety
- Trees / biodiversity / landscape / heritage
- Noise / disturbance
- Local or government policy / economic benefits
- Flooding issues

Matters which are not considered to be material planning considerations include:

- Loss of property value / loss of view
- Boundary / land ownership / neighbour disputes
- Impact on private drainage systems
- Inappropriate or personal comments
- Doubts as to integrity of applicant
- Breach of covenant

Please ensure that your statement does not contain any inappropriate comments, including those which are racist, sexist, xenophobic, defamatory, prejudiced or likely to cause offence. It should not be derogatory to this Council, or to any other party, or relate to matters the Council could consider to be confidential.

## Let us know if you want to speak

At [constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk) or on 0115 9148 511

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Rushcliffe Borough Council receives around 1,400 planning applications each year. Some of these will be from an individual household wanting to improve their home with additional accommodation, a new garage or conservatory; others will be from a property developer proposing to build a new housing estate, primary school and local shops with additional open community spaces. All of the applications we receive need to be considered by our planning officers, this includes consulting people who may be affected by the application. In many cases, these planning officers can make a decision under delegated powers but around 6% of applications each year are referred to the Council's Planning Committee for a decision.

#### What is the Planning Committee?

The Planning Committee is formed of 11 Borough Councillors who make decisions on those applications referred to the Committee. These meetings take place once a month and are open to the public – dates and agendas (once they are published) can be found on our website [www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy](http://www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/councilanddemocracy). You can also see who is on the Planning Committee on our website.

The majority of applications are referred to the Planning Committee where:

- they have been submitted by a Borough Councillor or senior member of staff
- they demonstrate a difference of opinion between the planning officers' recommendation and the ward councillors' views as expressed during the consultation
- the ward councillor has declared an interest
- the Borough Council is the applicant.

Please note that large or complex applications may be considered differently by the Planning Committee.

#### Having your say at Planning Committee?

If you are the applicant, an objector or ward councillor (Borough Councillor for the ward in which the application is being made), and an application is to be discussed at Planning Committee in which you have an interest, you can present your views directly to the Committee. The Planning Committee agenda is available on the website (at the same address as above) a week before the meeting and it lists the applications that will be discussed at the meeting. You will be able to speak directly to the Planning Committee if you are the applicant for the application under consideration or if you are representing objectors to the application for a maximum of five minutes; or if you are the ward councillor for the ward in which the application is being made you may speak to the Committee for up to five minutes (in multi councillor wards where the views of ward councillors are different, then both viewpoints will be heard). Speakers will be heard by the Committee in the following order: Planning Officer (time unlimited), applicant, objector, and ward councillor. No cross examination of the applicant or objector will be permitted.

#### How do I register my wish to speak?

If you wish to speak at Planning Committee, you will need to contact our Constitutional Services team at [constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk) or on 0115 9148 511 with your name, address and telephone number, the application number you wish to speak about, and whether you are objecting to, or supporting the application. Requests to speak at Planning Committee must be received by 5pm on the Monday before the meeting. Only one applicant, objector and ward councillor (except in a multi councillor ward where the views of councillors differ) may speak at the Planning Committee on each application. If more than one person in each category wishes to speak, you will be asked to give us permission to share your contact details with other people wishing to speak and decide amongst yourselves who speaks at the meeting.

## What happens at the Planning Committee?

The following format is followed at each Planning Committee:

- apologies for absence from Committee members absent
- notification of any substitutions
- declarations of interest from Committee members
- minutes of the previous meeting agreed and signed.

Then the applications for consideration at this meeting are presented – for each application:

- the planning officer presents a report containing the recommendation
- opportunity for the applicant to speak
- opportunity for a representative of any objectors to speak
- opportunity for the relevant ward councillor to speak
- the Committee members will then discuss the application and take a vote
- this process will be repeated until all applications have been considered.

## What should I talk about when I speak to the Committee?

Firstly, it depends on whether you are the applicant, whether you are representing those that object to the application, or acting in your capacity as a ward councillor. All speakers must ensure that their statement only refers to planning-related issues, examples are detailed below – these are the only issues which the Committee can consider and to speak about other issues would waste the time that you have. Speakers may not address questions directly to the Committee or the planning officers present. Speakers will not generally be questioned by the Committee – in very exceptional cases the Chairman might ask you to clarify a point of fact.

## Relevant planning-related issues that can be considered by the Committee

The Committee can only take planning-related issues into account when making their decision. Therefore, you should ensure that your statement relates to material planning considerations which may include:

- Overlooking / loss of privacy
- Design / effect on appearance of area
- Access, parking, traffic, road safety
- Trees / biodiversity / landscape / heritage
- Noise / disturbance
- Local or government policy / economic benefits
- Flooding issues

Matters which are not considered to be material planning considerations include:

- Loss of property value / loss of view
- Boundary / land ownership / neighbour disputes
- Impact on private drainage systems
- Inappropriate or personal comments
- Doubts as to integrity of applicant
- Breach of covenant

Please ensure that your statement does not contain any inappropriate comments, including those which are racist, sexist, xenophobic, defamatory, prejudiced or likely to cause offence. It should not be derogatory to this Council, or to any other party, or relate to matters the Council could consider to be confidential.

## Let us know if you want to speak

At [constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk](mailto:constitutionalservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk) or on 0115 9148 511