

## **Communities Scrutiny Group**

### **Chairman's Foreword**

This annual report summarises the main work undertaken by the Communities Scrutiny Group 2019/20. Following a review of the Council's scrutiny functions in 2018, it was recommended that a scrutiny group be created to oversee the Council's community partnerships, areas of community concern and the Council's responsibility to be environmentally sustainable.

The Communities Scrutiny Group have scrutinised topics such as the Council's carbon reduction plan and the Council's community partnership with Positive Futures and YouNG – both of which had recommendations approved by Cabinet.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has undoubtedly presented challenges to the communities of Rushcliffe however; the Group will continue to monitor on-going projects and government policies over the next twelve months including the Council's waste strategy.

I would like to thank all members of the Group for their very active involvement, support and topic suggestions and particularly my Vice Chairman, Councillor Bal Bansal.



**Councillor Jonathan Wheeler  
Chairman**



**Councillor Bal Bansal  
Vice Chairman**

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

The Communities Scrutiny Group responsibilities 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.

## **Our work this year**

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

- Community Partnership Review – Positive Futures and YouNG;
- Carbon Management Plan Development and Review;
- Public Spaces Protection Order Review;
- Review of Community Facilities in West Bridgford;
- Fly tipping; and
- Waste Strategy.

## **Community Partnership Review – Positive Futures and YouNG**

The Community Development Manager presented the report of the Executive Manager – Communities which provided the Group with an overview of the current service level agreement with the Trent Bridge Community Trust who currently deliver both the Positive Futures and YouNG projects on behalf of the Council both of which were due to expire on the 31 December 2020.

The Group were asked to consider the options from one of the following commissioning proposals;

- a) Commission Trent Bridge Community Trust to combine the current Positive Futures and YouNG Service Level Agreements at existing levels of £192,000 per annum for the period 2021-2025.
- b) Commission Trent Bridge Community Trust to combine the current Positive Futures and YouNG Service Level Agreement at a reduced level of £150,000 per annum (22% reduction).
- c) De-commission delivery of one or both of the Positive Futures and YouNG projects at the end of the current Service Level Agreement period.

The Group were very supportive of the Positive Futures programme, and believed that it had a better outcome for individuals in comparison to the YouNG project. It was suggested that perhaps the Council could fund the Positive Futures programme at existing levels and send out a tender for the commission of a new programme for young people to enhance their talents and abilities to replace the YouNG project. It was also discussed that a programme to target sport and a healthy lifestyle could be more beneficial to young people than work experience placements and entrepreneurship opportunities. However, the majority of the Group agreed that there was not enough entrepreneurship opportunities in the Borough and so the Council should commit to support the YouNG Project.

The Group resolved to recommend to Cabinet that Trent Bridge Community Trust should be commissioned to combine the current Positive Futures and YouNG Service Level Agreements at existing levels of £192,000 per annum for the period 2021 – 2025.

## **Carbon Management Plan Development and Review**

The Community Development Manager presented the report of the Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods that outlined the Council's current strategic framework and recent performance in reducing carbon emissions from the Council's direct operations in order for the Council to achieve carbon neutral status by 2030.

It was suggested that solar panel farms could be used as an income stream for the Council with the loss of business rates from Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station in 2025. The Group also discussed the possibility of Carbon and Environmental impacts for reports be added as a heading to all Council reports. It was noted that ongoing monitoring of the delivery of the action plan would need to be incorporated into future scrutiny work programmes as there was no quick and easy response to the scale of the challenge faced.

The Community Development Manager provided an update to the Group in January 2020, which contained a draft of the Council's Carbon Reduction Action Plan for consideration and discussion to further inform development prior to adoption as a working document. It was explained that although it was not currently possible to quantify the full level of investment required to achieve carbon neutral status by 2030, the Communities Scrutiny Group was asked to consider recommending to Cabinet that this target should be adopted and a budget established to support delivery.

Further suggestions were made by the Group to add to the action plan. Some concerns were raised about the financial impact of the Council aiming to become carbon neutral. For example, it was stated that the construction of Bingham Leisure Centre was going to cost an extra £370,000 in order to greatly reduce carbon emissions. It was agreed that the target for the Council to be carbon neutral by 2030 was a challenging aim and would require resources, but the cost of not setting this target to focus work on tackling the issue was unacceptable.

The Group endorsed the action plan and requested that Cabinet set a target for becoming carbon neutral for the Council's own emissions by 2030. It was also recommended that Cabinet support budget provision within the Council's Medium-Term financial strategy to deliver carbon reduction actions. These recommendations were approved by Cabinet in March 2020.

### **Review of the Public Spaces Protection Order**

The Environmental Health Manager presented the report of the Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods which asked the Group to consider whether to extend the current Public Space Protection Order for a further three years.

The Group asked questions regarding the Rough Sleepers Group that meets monthly. The Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods noted that The Council had always recognised that persons sleeping outdoors needed support rather than an enforcement approach and the Council works closely with partners through the rough sleepers group including Framework, to ensure that it takes place. It was explained that the Rough Sleepers Group deals with known individuals who were homeless and that the Group aims to establish the root cause of their homelessness and support them to make positive changes.

The Group recommended to Council to extend the Public Space Protection Order. It was resolved by Council in December 2019 that the Public Spaces Protection Order to control street drinking and outdoor sleeping be approved.

### **Review of Community Facilities in West Bridgford**

The Service Manager – Transformation presented the report of the Executive Manager – Transformation that provided the Group with an update on community facilities in West Bridgford including their current usage, income and expenditure.

Members of the Group had several suggestions on how to improve the booking techniques of hiring the community facilities and how to reduce the running costs. These included:

- The ability to book the hire of community facilities online;
- To have user groups or 'friends of' groups to help run the community facilities; and
- Using Community Infrastructure Levy payments to invest in a new community facility in West Bridgford, which is more energy efficient, which would therefore reduce running costs.

Following these recommendations, the Executive Manager – Transformation said that the Council was committed to looking at overhead costs in more detail and that the Group would be updated on the possibility of a new community facility in Edwalton.

### **Litter, dog fouling and fly tipping (part one – fly tipping)**

The Environmental Health Manager presented the report of the Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods that detailed an update on fly tipping and the Council's response and delivered a presentation to the Group.

Following the presentation, the Chairman suggested that an additional recommendation be approved by the Group and following a discussion it was agreed that the following be added as an additional recommendation:

In light of an increase in fly tipping incidents in the Borough, it is recommended that the Chief Executive be asked in conjunction with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder to review the resources deployed on enviro crime enforcement ahead of 2021/22 budget setting process with a view to providing suitable additional resource to cope with the increased workload.

It was agreed that further advice and education was required to help residents make appropriate checks on who they are asking to dispose of their waste. The officers suggested that Councillors encourage Rushcliffe residents to report fly tipping incidents and provide evidence where possible by taking photographs and making a note of the vehicle registration number.

### **Waste Strategy**

The Service Manager – Neighbourhoods delivered a presentation to the Group, which outlined Rushcliffe Borough Council's current waste strategy and provided an update to the Group about the government's Environment Bill, which could potentially have a significant impact on the Borough's weekly waste collections and the Council's income.

The Group were pleased to note that manufacturers would be taxed if they produced plastic products with less than 30% recycled plastic but stated that this must drive an alternative to the production of plastic. Some members of the Group also encouraged councillors to visit the Veolia to find out more about the materials that can be recycled.

**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 are looking forward to developing a comprehensive work programme for the year ahead.