



Council

Thursday, 2 December 2021

Bingham Improvement Board

Report of the Chief Executive

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership,
Councillor S R Robinson**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. At the September 2021 Council meeting, Council received a petition from The Bingham Deserves Better pressure group, presented by Mr Anthony Fox, calling for a community governance review of Bingham Town Council and considered whether the petition was valid.
- 1.2. Whilst Council did not accept the petition it did resolve to support a commitment to working collaboratively with Bingham Town Council and to offer to set up an Improvement Board to review governance and improvement issues at the Town Council. In addition, the Leader committed to bringing a report back to the next Council meeting, in December, detailing the membership and terms of reference of the Improvement Board.
- 1.3. This report provides an update on progress since the last Council meeting.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- a) Council welcomes the progress made and the joint commitment by Rushcliffe Borough Council and Bingham Town Council to deliver an Improvement Board in 2022; and
- b) a further update report be received by Cabinet in Summer 2022.

3. Reasons for recommendation

There is not a policy decision for Council to take but in light of the interest in the matter shared across the Council and the desire to support Bingham Town Council and its residents, an update report was agreed at the last Council meeting.

4. Supporting information

- 4.1. Following the decision at September Council, set out in paragraph 1.2, the Chief Executive wrote to Bingham Town Council offering Rushcliffe Borough Council's support in setting up an Improvement Board. This was debated at the Bingham Town Council meeting of 19 October and agreed.
- 4.2. The Chief Executive met with Neil Taylor, former Chief Executive of Bassetlaw District Council, Jonathan Owen, Chief Executive of the National Association of Local Councils and David Pye, Advisor at the Local Government Association and parish councillor, and asked them if they would be happy to be on the Improvement Board alongside two Town Councillors. They agreed and are keen to be involved and to support the work.
- 4.3. Subsequently, the Leader and Chief Executive met with the Mayor and Clerk of Bingham Town Council and discussed draft terms of reference for the Board which are set out in Appendix A.
- 4.4. The draft terms of reference were sent on to the Town Council and they debated these, and the proposed Bingham Town Council Board appointments at an Extraordinary Council Meeting on 23 November. Bingham Town Council resolved to accept the draft terms of reference for the Improvement Board.
- 4.5. A budget of £5,000 was agreed by the Town Council and this will be placed in its reserves plan for 2022/23.
- 4.6. The Council nominated Councillor R Bird and Councillor G Williams to be the Town Council's representatives on the Board.
- 4.7. There were four people nominated to act as substitutes in the event that one of the nominated Councillors was unable to attend. The substitute members are Councillors T Wallace, J Lewis, G Simms and M Stockwood.
- 4.8. The draft terms of reference were also shared with the Rushcliffe Borough Council political group leaders whose comments (included in Appendix A) will be shared with the Improvement Board to consider when they meet and adopt the Terms of Reference at their first meeting in the new year.

5. Next steps

- 5.1. The independent board members (Mr Taylor, Mr Owen and Mr Pye) will undertake a two-day visit to Bingham in January to meet Councillors and other stakeholders.
- 5.2. The Bingham Improvement Board will be supported by Rushcliffe Borough Council's Monitoring Officer and the Bingham Town Clerk.
- 5.3. The Board will consider its work programme and arrange a series of meetings over the next few months. It will report back to Bingham Town Council and to Rushcliffe Borough Council.

6. Risks and uncertainties

- 6.1. The Improvement Board will be most effective if it has the genuine buy-in, commitment and support of Bingham Town Council.
- 6.2. It has cross-party Bingham Town Council representation, and the Council has endorsed its creation at the Extraordinary Town Council meeting of 23 November 2021. Therefore, it is believed that the Board will be respected and influential. It will work on the basis of a positive, pro-active and forward-looking approach.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial implications

A budget of £10,000, contributed 50:50 by Bingham Town Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council has been allocated to fund the setting up and administration of the Board. The £5,000 from Rushcliffe Borough Council will be allocated from in year underspends. A budget of £5,000 was agreed by the Town Council on 23 November and this will be placed in its reserves plan for 2022/23.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications from this report. As it is not proposed that Rushcliffe Borough Councillors sit on the board, there is no requirement to amend Rushcliffe Borough Council's Constitution to include the Board.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report, but the Board will be asked to consider equalities in any recommendations they may make.

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

There are no S17 implications arising from this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	As this report relates to support for Bingham Town Council, the Council's own corporate priorities are not directly applicable. The Improvement Board will be interested in supporting Bingham Town Council deliver its corporate priorities.
Efficient Services	N/A
Sustainable Growth	N/A
The Environment	N/A

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- a) Council welcomes the progress made and the joint commitment by Rushcliffe Borough Council and Bingham Town Council to deliver an Improvement Board in 2022; and
- b) a further update report be received by Cabinet in Summer 2022.

For more information contact:	Katherine Marriott Chief Executive 0115 914 8219 kmarriott@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Report to Council 30 September 2021 ("Petition: Community Governance Review (Bingham Town Council)") and associated minutes
List of appendices:	Draft Terms of Reference for Bingham Improvement Board

Bingham Improvement Board
Terms of Reference
Draft

Description

The Improvement Board is established to consider the operation of Bingham Town Council (“the Council”) and to address any governance issues at the Council in response to the Bingham Deserves Better petition received by Rushcliffe Borough Council. The board will work with the Town Council and provide short progress reports to the Town Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council on a monthly basis for a period of up to 6 months.

Upon the board concluding its review and oversight of any actions recommended (expected at the end of the 6 months), a final report will be presented to Bingham Town Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council as principal authority.

Purpose

The purpose of the Improvement Board is to:

- Deliver an action plan responding to the issues raised in the petition presented by the Bingham Deserves Better group to Rushcliffe Borough Council on 30th September 2021
- Support improvement in the Council’s wider governance arrangements
- Ensure that a range of voices, including those independent to the Council contribute to the development of governance at the Council
- Help the Council to develop a culture of respect between Councillors and between Councillors and employees

Objective

The board’s objectives are to:

- Support Bingham Town Council to:
 - Enhance public confidence in the Council
 - Demonstrate its ambitions for the local areas and its local communities
 - Ensure accountable, transparent and effective discharge of the Council's duties [ADD IN this third point?]

It will:

- Assess the Council’s current governance arrangements and identify and make recommendations to the Council on areas for improvement
- Review the standing orders of Bingham Town Council in relation to governance improvement and recommend any amendments to the Council as considered appropriate
- Identify best practice and gather views on matters within the boards remit from relevant internal and external sources

- Steer the implementation of the action plan (to be created) and wider governance improvement
- Monitor progress on the implementation of the action plan
- Make recommendations to the Council to support improved governance.

Membership and chairing

The board will consist of 5 members:

- An independent chairman (Neil Taylor, former Bassetlaw CEX)
- 2x Bingham Town Councillors – to be appointed by Bingham Town Council
- 1 advisor from the National Association of Local Councils – Jonathan Owen, CEX
- 1 advisor from the Local Government Association – David Pye (David is also a parish councillor)

The board will be chaired by the Independent Chairman.

The board will be supported by Bingham Town Council's proper officer (the Town Clerk) and the Monitoring Officer of Rushcliffe Borough Council. Admin support will be provided by RBC.

Substitutes

Substitute members may be appointed to this board for the Bingham Town Council representatives to be agreed by Bingham Town Council.

For all other positions substitutes may not be appointed.

Quorum

The quorum for the board is three members.

Field work/Review

Prior to the commencement of board meetings, the three independent members of the board (Neil Taylor, Jonathan Owen and David Pye) will undertake two days of field work/review work in Bingham in order to meet town councillors and staff, community members and to get a sense of the ambitions and objectives of the council for the future. It is anticipated this will be in January 2022.

Frequency of meetings

It is anticipated that the board will initially meet monthly for up to 6 months from January 2022.

Duration

The board may meet periodically following the completion of its work until March 2023 to review progress.

Status

The Board is a non-statutory improvement board and will report its recommendations back to Bingham Town Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council. Its recommendations will be in the public domain. It is intended to be supported and positive. It will be for Bingham Town Council to work with the board and to adopt any recommendations of the board.