

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
CABINET
TUESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2022**

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena,
Rugby Road, West Bridgford
and live streamed on Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors S J Robinson (Chairman), A Edyvean (Vice-Chairman), A Brennan,
R Inglis and G Moore

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors R Jones and J Walker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
S Sull	Monitoring Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

There were no apologies

55 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

56 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 January 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 11 January 2022, were declared
a true record and signed by the Chairman.

57 Citizens' Questions

There were no citizens questions.

58 Opposition Group Leaders' Questions

Question from Councillor J Walker to Councillor Moore.

“How will Cabinet lobby this government for more clarity after years of
uncertainty regarding Business Rates and New Homes Bonus and massive
delays to the outcome of the Fairer Funding Review? “

Councillor Moore responded by stating that the Council, not Cabinet, would

continue to liaise with stakeholders such as the Local Government Association and District Councils Network, to work with Government, so that there is more certainty with regards to local government finance and areas of funding reform. The delays referred to in the finance reforms have been due to two key factors, the 2019 General Election and the impact of Covid, which has massively impacted the social and economic landscape over the past two years.

Councillor J Walker asked a supplementary question to Councillor Moore in relation to the levelling-up agenda.

Councillor Robinson advised that this was not a supplementary question, it was a new question; however, Councillor Moore responded by stating that the funding of local government was a huge subject, Business Rates had been under review for a number of years and that had yet to be completed, the New Homes Bonus continued to have an uncertain future, and that was why budgets changed and had to remain flexible. Local government funding was very complex, with the only straightforward element being Council Tax and the income received from the Council's investments.

59 Future Delivery Model for Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Services

The Leader, Councillor Robinson, presented the report of the Chief Executive outlining proposals for the future delivery model for Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Services.

Councillor Robinson referred to the establishment of Streetwise in 2014, which had included two entities, Streetwise Env Ltd (trading) and Streetwise Env Ltd (teckal). Cabinet was advised that the ambition at the time had been to establish a social enterprise company, with franchising, and to operate in commercial markets as it expanded, with its main focus on delivering the Council's core environmental services contract.

Councillor Robinson advised that a cross-party member working group had been established to oversee the project, and based on its recommendations, the two companies were launched. In 2018, the main contract had been extended until August 2022, and Cabinet noted that during the tenure of Streetwise it had been a very challenging period, for various reasons, including the effects of the Covid pandemic, changes to the market and how services were delivered, and in particular the loss of a major contract with Metropolitan Housing.

Cabinet was advised that with the contract renewal due in August 2022, the Council commissioned an independent report undertaken by Kelake, a third-party industry expert, details of which were highlighted in the report. Kelake looked at future options for the contract, if it should be extended, or be brought in house, to provide the most viable option and best value for money. Officers and Cabinet members reviewed those two options, together with Streetwise Business Plans and it was noted that the top priority of this review was to ensure that the core contract was fulfilled. Financial costs were also considered, details of which were highlighted in paragraph 7.1 of the report and Appendix C and based on this review it was being recommended that the

service be brought back in house. In making this recommendation, Councillor Robinson stressed that this decision did not reflect on the Streetwise management team and staff, who had provided an excellent service, during very challenging times, and in particular the Managing Director was thanked for his hard work.

In conclusion, Councillor Robinson stated that this was the time to take strong, decisive action, to ensure that the most viable delivery of the core contract was maintained going forward, for the benefit of residents in Rushcliffe.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Moore agreed that this had not been an easy decision to make and confirmed that a great deal of discussion had taken place, with the loss of the key contract and the vagaries of the market being partly responsible for this decision being made.

Councillor Robinson referred to the recommendations and noted that the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Safety would provide an oversight on the project, to ensure a seamless progression, and the Monitoring Officer would be responsible for overseeing the legal process. It was reiterated that this had been a very difficult decision, which had taken a great deal of time, and it was the best decision for all Rushcliffe residents.

Councillor Brennan referred to the positive feedback she had received from residents regarding Streetwise's work and stated that she was confident that the Council would continue to maintain that high level of customer service going forward.

In conclusion, Councillor Robinson referred to the new direction being given from the Government and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), being more reticent to undertake commercial activity, and it was noted that other councils had recently experienced problems. Streetwise was profitable, it was no detriment to the company that this decision had been made, and Cabinet was reminded that the Council had to be mindful of Government policy and CIPFA guidelines, to ensure that going forward risks were minimised for those paying Council Tax.

60 2022/23 Budget and Financial Strategy

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Customer Access, Councillor Moore, presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services outlining the Council's proposed budget for 2022/23, the five-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) from 2022/23 to 2026/27, which included the revenue budget, the proposed Capital Programme, the Transformation Strategy and the Capital and Investment Strategy.

Councillor Moore advised that this budget was designed to move on from the impact of the Covid pandemic and the financial challenges that the Council had faced, and in part the Council continued to face. Cabinet noted that this was a positive budget, which focused on economic recovery and growth within the Borough, whilst supporting the most vulnerable in the community.

Councillor Moore advised that the budget in comparison to last year had less

Covid support, and overall had a more encouraging outlook towards income levels. One issue that had required serious consideration this year was the effect of inflation on staff pay, supply and service costs, particularly utility and fuel costs. Cabinet was reminded that Business Rates had yet to be reformed, and that such a delay could have an impact, as had the recent successful appeal by the Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station, which had resulted in a reduced Business Rates payment from £2.9m to £1.6m. However, the Council had been aware of that risk, and prudent provision had been made over the years, to absorb that volatility in Business Rates and Cabinet noted that the Council was sustainable due to its range of income streams.

Councillor Moore highlighted key issues in the report, including the continued uncertainty regarding the New Homes Bonus, which stood at £1.6m this year, and the Climate Change Reserve, which would shortly return to its original figure of £1m.

In respect of the Capital Programme, Councillor Moore advised that the programme was moving as planned, with projects including the Bingham Leisure Hub and Crematorium progressing well, and by the end of 2026, the Council's capital investment would be over £27m, without the need for any external borrowing, which Councillor Moore considered to be an excellent achievement.

Councillor Moore stated that all this work had been supported by a very able and competent financial team, which had put together an excellent, prudent budget, whilst also dealing with numerous grant support work and Council Tax support and thanked the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, the Service Manager – Finance and the Revenues Manager and their teams for safely guiding the Council through recent unprecedented times.

In respect of Council Tax, Councillor Moore advised that it was proposed to raise Council Tax by 2.4%, which ensured that Rushcliffe's Council Tax remained the lowest in Nottinghamshire and one of the lowest nationally.

In conclusion, Councillor Moore stated that this was an excellent, prudent budget to support the Council in the post Covid era, and to allow it to continue its excellent service delivery and growth in the Borough.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Edyvean referred to the strong financial position of the Council, and in particular to the progress of the Capital Programme, without the need for any external borrowing, despite all of the recent challenges and reiterated the thanks given to officers for their sound financial management and hard work.

Councillor Robinson echoed the thanks given to officers, referred to the huge ambition in this budget and reiterated the comments regarding the success of not requiring any external borrowing to progress the Capital Programme.

61 **South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2027**

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities and Climate Change, Councillor

Brennan, presented the report of the Director – Neighbourhoods providing an update on the South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 to 2027.

Councillor Brennan stated that the Borough was fortunate to have very low numbers of rough sleepers and homeless people; however, that should not diminish its importance nor the impact on those who were affected, and the Council could not afford to be complacent and should keep the situation under review, by working with all relevant partners to tackle the issue.

Cabinet was reminded that the Council was obliged to publish a Homelessness Strategy every five years, which it did in conjunction with Gedling and Broxtowe Borough Councils, as the three Councils faced many common challenges. The homelessness landscape had seen a number of significant changes in recent years, details of which were outlined in the report, and Cabinet was reminded of the importance of members being aware of the Council's duties and how they would be discharged, with Cabinet formally endorsing that approach and the Strategy. Details of the six identified key themes were set out in paragraph 4.7 of the report, with the actions and targets that supported them outlined in Appendix A, with progress against those targets being reported to the South Nottinghamshire Interagency Forum.

Councillor Brennan referred to the financial implications, outlined in paragraph 6.1 and advised Cabinet that across the three Boroughs, over £700k of Government funding had been secured to help deliver the Strategy.

In conclusion, Councillor Brennan reiterated that although the numbers affected in the South Nottinghamshire area were low, ideally no one in Rushcliffe should be faced with homelessness or sleeping rough, so it was important to remain vigilant.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Inglis noted the statutory requirements previously referred to and reiterated the importance of working in partnership with the other two authorities. Cabinet was reminded that it was not acceptable, for any reason, that anyone in this country should be forced into rough sleeping, as having a place to live was a fundamental requirement for wellbeing. It was acknowledged that some people chose this way of life, so support and options must also be in place to support them, and the Action Plan focused on prevention, intervention, and recovery.

In conclusion, Councillor Inglis welcomed the Strategy, as an essential document in keeping the strong partnership together and helping to raise awareness of the challenges faced by the homeless, rough sleepers and Councils.

62 Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities and Climate Change, Councillor Brennan, presented the report of the Director – Neighbourhoods, providing an update on the revisions to the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.

Councillor Brennan advised that the aim of the Grant was to enable people to

receive assistance, to allow them to remain in their own homes, which was beneficial for them, and reduced demand on other critical services.

Cabinet was advised that the Policy was aligned to the wider Nottinghamshire Policy, and would be adopted by other districts and boroughs in the county. The provision of such grants was mandatory and awarded through the Better Care Fund, which was administered by Nottinghamshire County Council and the reasons for the revised Policy were set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

Councillor Brennan advised that the upper limit of the mandatory grant had been set nationally at £30k, with the key change now being to increase the upper limit of the discretionary grant for major adaptations from £10k to £20k. Further key revisions to the Policy were highlighted in paragraph 4.8 of the report.

In conclusion, Councillor Brennan advised that aim of the changes was to ensure a consistent approach across the county and that this provision was a legal requirement.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Inglis stated that it was pleasing to note that the grant amounts were being increased, to reflect increased costs, as the adaptations were so important in assisting residents to live independently. Taking away the fixed five year term for any revision would allow the document to be updated when necessary, and that flexibility was welcomed.

Councillor Robinson referred to pressures on the NHS and stressed the importance of ensuring that residents had the opportunity to stay in their own properties, through the use of the grants.

63 Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, Councillor Edyvean, presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth, providing an update on the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Councillor Edyvean advised that the SPD formed an important part of Rushcliffe's Local Plan, and a draft of the SPD had been presented to the Local Development Framework Group (LDFG) in March 2021, prior to being put out to public consultation. Following that consultation, a number of revisions had been made and Cabinet noted that those revisions had been agreed by the LDFG in December 2021.

Councillor Edyvean stated that the document defined the levels of affordable housing the Council wished to be delivered across the Borough, with a target of 30% in most areas, although in areas that already had higher levels of affordable housing, the target would be reduced to 20% and 10%.

Cabinet was reminded of the importance of ensuring that properties were affordable, and within the recommendation that was being addressed by an amendment to the discount required on designated affordable housing for sale

or part ownership, in line with recent house price data and by using a salary multiplier of four times salary to help determine affordability.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Moore referred to the importance of this document in giving clear guidance to anyone involved in the delivery of affordable housing and welcomed the revisions.

Councillor Robinson stated that he was very proud of Rushcliffe's excellent record in respect of building affordable housing and advised that this document would form an important part of the guidance going forward as more homes were built and made available.

64 Edwalton Golf Course Strategic Review

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, Councillor Edyvean, presented the report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services, providing an update on the Edwalton Golf Course (EGC) Strategic Review, since it was last considered by Cabinet in March 2021.

Councillor Edyvean reminded Cabinet of what a key asset EGC was to West Bridgford, and the need for continued good management of the facility. The previous report had noted the decline in usage over the past decade, which had resulted in more recent annual losses; however, post lockdown has seen a rise in usage, with the facility now breaking even, which was welcomed.

Councillor Edyvean confirmed that the site had been designated as a potential development site for some time; however, that had to be balanced against the green space that the course provided in an expanding urban environment. In March 2021, Cabinet had approved the undertaking of a technical assessment of the site to establish if a development strategy was feasible, and Cabinet was advised that the result of the assessment had identified the need to keep some golf activity, with a possible enhanced offering of the development of a driving range, and the proposals had also been endorsed by the Communities Scrutiny Group.

Cabinet was reminded that although the site had been identified as potentially suitable for redevelopment that had to be balanced against the Council's total forecast housing supply, which exceeded the Council's requirement through to 2038.

In conclusion, Councillor Edyvean confirmed that the recommendations in the report would safeguard the site from medium to long term development, whilst proposing to improve the current golf and leisure offering.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Inglis stated that it was commendable that the Council had commissioned a report to identify the best use of EGC, which had evaluated all options. The area was of great community and ecological value and by keeping and enhancing the golfing facilities, and undertaking proposed wilding, Cabinet noted that the site would be protected from additional housing as Rushcliffe's quota had already been met up until 2038.

In conclusion, Councillor Inglis referred to this important community asset and hoped that local residents would be fully supportive of the proposals, and in turn that would encourage further increased usage in the future.

Councillor Brennan reiterated previous comments that the Borough already had planned housing provision, which exceeded its target and that it was important to consider other important factors, including the Council's climate change commitments and the ecological impact of the development of any site.

Councillor Robinson stated that EGC was a key asset not just for West Bridgford but for the Borough and referred to its strategic importance in respect of its size and usage, and it was essential that the Council regularly reviewed all of its assets, to ensure that they provided the best value for money. As previously mentioned, it was important to strike a balance between the need for housing and safeguarding community assets, and it was pleasing to have this reassurance from the report. Cabinet was reminded that the report had looked at all options and it was encouraging that the recommendation was to retain the golf and leisure usage, for the benefit of everyone, especially given the extensive housing development surrounding the site.

In conclusion, Councillor Robinson reminded Cabinet that the Council would need to be mindful of future housing requirements; however, it was pleasing that the Council had identified its housing quota up until 2038.

65 Planning Committee Pilot

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Business and Growth, Councillor Edyvean, presented the report of the Director – Development and Economic Growth, providing an update on the Planning Committee pilot.

Councillor Edyvean referred to the previous decision made by Cabinet in June 2021, to allow a six months' trial with Planning Committee meetings commencing at 2.30pm, and it had been agreed at Full Council that the trial would be monitored, to assess the impact on achieving a robust structure, which was key for the Borough's reputation. Cabinet was reminded that the proposals had originally been made in light of a best practice review, and at that time some concerns had been raised over the impact that an afternoon meeting could have, on the committee process, and to the availability of participants.

Councillor Edyvean confirmed that the pilot had taken place for six months and had covered actions to improve the working of the Committee, including changes to officer presentations, and encouraging Councillors to raise points of clarification with officers earlier in the process, together with the change to the start time of the meeting. It was hoped by moving the start time of the meeting to earlier in the day that participants would not feel fatigued and would be best able to consider reports and make optimum decisions. Cabinet noted that greater emphasis was also to be placed on ensuring that Ward Councillor objections had sound planning principles and that consultation comments should be made in a timely manner.

Councillor Edyvean advised that the rationale behind all of the improvements

was explained in paragraph 4.2 of the report and it was acknowledged that there had been mixed feedback, with some continued concern regarding the availability of Councillors to attend daytime meetings, and the impact that might have on the diversity of the Committee. Due to the mixed feedback, a survey was conducted of the various participants, with 75 questionnaires sent out, and of the 46 returned, 39 preferred the earlier start time.

Given the positive feedback, Councillor Edyvean proposed the two recommendations in the report, including an amendment to recommendation a) to add suitable wording relating to the half hour extension to ensure that once an application was presented, it should be determined in that session.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Brennan stated that she understood and appreciated the strength of feeling amongst some Councillors, and whilst the change to the start time would be challenging for some, it would be easier for others to attend daytime meetings and it was impossible to satisfy everyone. Given the clear preference in the survey, Councillor Brennan agreed that it would be appropriate to implement the new time and stated that from her own experience, late meetings were not the best environment to allow appropriate consideration of applications.

Councillor Robinson agreed that whatever time meetings were held, it would not be convenient for everyone, and he welcomed the process that had been followed, with the pilot, confirmation at Full Council that the changes would be reviewed, and the undertaking of the survey. Cabinet was reminded that the survey had been completed by various parties, not just Councillors, and it was pleasing to note the number of responses, which had overwhelmingly supported the earlier start time of the meeting, and in the interests of democracy it was appropriate that the changes should be implemented.

In conclusion, Councillor Robinson stated that having attended a number of the daytime Planning Committee meetings, he had noted how well they had worked, and referred to the difficulties faced when attending meetings that ran late into the evening.

66 Exclusion of Public

It was resolved that under Regulation 21(1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

67 Endorsement of the East Midlands Freeport Full Business Case

The Leader presented the report of the Chief Executive providing an update on the endorsement of the East Midlands Freeport Full Business Case.

It was RESOLVED that:

- a) the work of the Freeport Board be endorsed;

- b) the content of the Full Business Case (FBC), as set out in the report and supporting appendices be endorsed in principle, and the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, S151 Officer, and Monitoring Officer be granted delegated authority to sign off the final FBC prior to submission to government;
- c) the governance arrangements and incorporation of the Freeport, the use of Retained Business Rates to support economic prosperity in the region and the formalising of the relationship between the Freeport and the Development Corporation being developed be noted;
- d) the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Section 151 Officer, and the Monitoring Officer be granted delegated authority to agree the formal arrangements for the Council's role in the Freeport's governance structure and enter into appropriate arrangements;
- e) it be confirmed that support of the Freeport FBC is separate to adopting a Local Development Order for the Ratcliffe on Soar site, which will be subject to the required public consultation and consideration including Secretary of State support as appropriate; and
- f) a future report on the incorporation arrangements, either to Cabinet or Council be received as appropriate.

The meeting closed at 7.52 pm.

CHAIRMAN