

Statement for the Full Council Meeting on 17 March 2025

Firstly, I want to acknowledge that our communication following the February meeting could have been handled more effectively. While our office staff promptly notified all users within 2–3 days, we did not ensure our residents were equally informed or provided with the necessary context to understand the Council's decision. This communication gap regrettably allowed incomplete and one-sided information to circulate, leading to confusion and concern within our community.

Looking ahead to the financial year, the Rothley Parish Council (RPC) is projected to subsidise the Rothley Centre by approximately £30,000. Additionally, the lease obligates the Parish Council to shoulder all repair and maintenance costs—expenses that are likely to be substantial given the building's age and size. It is neither fair nor sustainable to continue transferring these costs to Rothley residents, most of whom do not utilise the Centre.

In February, the Council included an agenda item to consider the future of the Rothley Centre. This agenda was made publicly accessible through our website and noticeboards. However, due to the sensitive nature of ongoing lease negotiations, the discussion took place in the confidential session of the meeting.

During this session, all relevant facts were presented to the Council members. After thorough deliberation, a proposal to serve Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) with notice to terminate the lease by the end of 2025 was put to a vote. Out of the 10 elected councillors entrusted with managing RPC's affairs, nine supported the proposal, with one abstention. No one voted against this proposal.

Following this decision, we informed CBC and communicated with all Centre users. I am pleased to report that we have coordinated time slots for some Rothley-based users to transition to the Village Hall. Unfortunately, a few larger groups, organised by non-Rothley residents, could not be accommodated and will need to seek alternative venues.

It is important to note that for over a year, our solicitors have attempted to arrange a meeting with CBC to negotiate improved lease terms, but these efforts have been met with silence. Concerns have also been raised about the potential loss of the Centre car park. As both the Rothley Centre building and car park are listed as community assets in CBC's register, we firmly believe that CBC has a duty to maintain off-street parking in Service Centre Villages. This ensures the car park remains accessible to all residents and businesses.

Encouragingly, we have now secured a meeting with a CBC Director later this month—the first significant response since issuing the lease termination notice. This meeting will focus on the car park and lease arrangements.

In the meantime, RPC will be relocating its office to the Village Hall later this year, consolidating our activities there. This decision was not made lightly. After 38 years on the Council, I can assure you that it was one of the most difficult decisions I have faced. However, it is a necessary step to safeguard the financial stability of RPC and act in the best interests of our community.