

COUNCIL MEETING
30th January, 2013

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor Dave Pickering) (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Akhtar, Ali, Andrews, Astbury, Atkin, Barron, Beaumont, Beck, Burton, Clark, Currie, Dalton, Dodson, Doyle, Ellis, Falvey, Foden, Gilding, Godfrey, Gosling, Goult, J. Hamilton, N. Hamilton, Hoddinott, Hussain, Jepson, Johnston, Kaye, Lakin, Lelliott, License, McNeely, Middleton, Pitchley, Read, Robinson, Roche, Roddison, Rushforth, G. A. Russell, R. S. Russell, Sharman, Sims, Smith, Steele, Stone, Swift, Wallis, Watson, Whelbourn, Whysall, Wootton, Wright and Wyatt.

A68 COUNCIL MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 12th December, 2012, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Akhtar

A69 COMMUNICATIONS

(1) The Chief Executive submitted the following petition which had been referred to the appropriate Directorate for consideration:-

- 20 signatures regarding a skatepark at Queen Street, Dinnington.

(2) The Chief Executive submitted apologies for absence from Councillors Buckley, Donaldson, Havenhand, Mannion, P. A. Russell, Sangster and Tweed.

(3) The Mayor also wished to offer his congratulations to the Streetpride Service in ensuring the safety of both motorists and residents of Rotherham during the period of heavy snow.

A70 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public asked why were officers trained/encouraged to avoid answering questions from the public?

Example

- A. Total educational budget
- B. Amount per pupil
- C. Central Services percentage cost
- D. Is "C" above a national percentage
- E. Building Maintenance

No information after seven attempts over two days in Rotherham compared to only one call in another town.

The Leader reported that officers were not trained to avoid answering

questions from the public, but rather to assist and provide information in a clear way.

An officer had spoken to the member of the public concerned on the afternoon of 16th January answering questions A to D and a further question that was similar to question E.

The member of the public then approached a number of different officers for the information which was all available from one source.

A71 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee (Section B) (pages 5B to 7B) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Gosling

Seconder:- Councillor Sims

A72 CABINET MINUTES

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet (Section C) (pages 59C to 79C) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Akhtar

A73 DELEGATED POWERS MINUTES

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet Members as listed below be adopted:-

- Children, Young People and Families Services – Pages 34D to 44D (Section D)
- Culture and Tourism – Pages 16F to 23F (Section F)
- Regeneration and Development – Pages 46G to 54G (Section G)
- Adult Social Care – Pages 38H to 45H (Section H)
- Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods – Pages 37J to 45J (Section J)
- Health and Wellbeing – Pages 20K to 29K (Section K)
- Waste and Emergency Planning – Pages 41L to 45L (Section L)
- Deputy Leader – Pages 28N to 34N (Section N)

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Akhtar

A74 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee (Section P) (pages 23P to 33P) be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Kaye

Seconder: Councillor Gilding

A75 LICENSING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Board (Section Q) (Pages 18Q to 21Q) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Wootton

Seconder:- Councillor Barron

A76 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board (Section S) (pages 29S to 37S) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Wyatt

Seconder:- Councillor Doyle

A77 PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board (Section T) (pages 79T to 90T) be adopted.

Mover:- The Mayor
(Councillor Pickering)

Seconder:- Councillor Dodson

A78 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN

(1) Councillor Gilding asked, in spite of Streetpride doing an excellent job of snow clearing, why were 87 out of 147 of Rotherham's schools closed on Monday 21st January?

Councillor Lakin corrected the figures quoted and confirmed that there were in fact 126 schools in Rotherham of which 74 were closed on the 21st January, 2013. The decision to close a school was delegated to the Head Teacher/Governing Body as a blanket decision by Children and Young People's Services would be impracticable. The guidance on exceptional school closures outlined specifically that closure must be a last resort when all other options e.g. late opening, partial opening etc. had been investigated.

Many Teachers did not live in the proximity of school and indeed a lot did not even live in Rotherham. Where staff contacted the Head Teacher and reported that they were unable to get in to work, the Head Teacher then had to consider the safeguarding implications of opening the school e.g. were there adequate staff to safely supervise the pupils and meet legal requirements. The electronic reporting of a closure system the Service used had a justification section e.g. insufficient staff, unable to make the

site safe etc.

There were also issues to consider such as public transport links for staff unable to drive to work, school transport e.g. pupils at some schools were reliant on a bus service/special schools were reliant on specialised transport etc. It should be noted that large sites had to have pedestrian routes cleared and made safe to enable safe access to and egress from the site. There had been several successful claims for compensation relating to unsafe pedestrian routes on school sites in previous periods of inclement weather.

(2) Councillor Gilding asked what lessons have been learned from the appearance of the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services before the House of Commons Select Committee regarding child sexual exploitation?

Councillor Lakin reported that, in preparation for the Select Committee, the Chief Executive and Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services had read all the relevant transcripts for Child Sexual Exploitation and this assisted them in deepening their knowledge in responding to Child Sexual Exploitation.

Rotherham's Safeguarding Children Board would be launching a multi-agency Strategy and Plan in late March that set out how, as partners, the Council would be responding to Child Sexual Exploitation from 2013/14.

This knowledge was shared with the Children, Young People and Families Partnership last week.

Members have been invited to the regional conference on the 8th March, 2013 tackling Child Sexual Exploitation funded by Yorkshire and the Humber. It was hoped as many colleagues as possible could attend.

The Select Committee would be producing a report and recommendations at the conclusion of their enquiries and the Safeguarding Board and its partners would reflect these in the multi-agency Child Sexual Exploitation Plan as appropriate.

(3) Councillor Gilding stated that the Rotherham BME community was now 19,000, equating to 7.5% of the population and asked what were the figures in 2002?

Councillor Hussain reported that an estimate for 2002 showed a BME population of 11,400 or 4.6%.

(4) Councillor Gilding asked for the total final costs involved regarding the former South Yorkshire Trading Standards unit at Chapeltown.

Councillor Akhtar reported that the Council had, since 2005/06, made

provision in its statutory accounts of £2.625M in respect of its potential share of the liabilities arising from the former South Yorkshire Trading Standards Unit, but so far no payments had been made.

A79 QUESTIONS TO SPOKESPERSONS

Councillor Gilding asked the Police and Crime Panel Spokesperson what steps would be taken with the Police Commissioner to ensure that South Yorkshire Police were taking a more proactive approach to child sexual exploitation?

The Leader reported that the Panel was pro-active in ensuring that the Police and Crime Commissioner adhered to his commitment to give Child Sexual Exploitation a high priority.

This included endorsing the budget proposed by the Police and Crime Commissioner for 2013/14 which included the allocation of 10 posts to Child Protection duties.

In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner had set up quarterly South Yorkshire-wide meetings bringing together key colleagues from the Police, Local Authorities, Crown Prosecution Service, Probation, Local Safeguarding Children Boards to drive forward improvements in the response to Child Sexual Exploitation.

A80 FINAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME AND REVISIONS TO THE COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT AND EXEMPTIONS FOR SECOND HOMES AND EMPTY PROPERTIES

Consideration was given to the report which detailed Rotherham's proposed new Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) together with the proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions both which have been the subject of public consultation.

The Council's proposed scheme, protected pensioners benefits, as it was required to, but unlike the present Council Tax Benefit regime it was necessary to require working age claimants to make a contribution to their Council Tax bill. This contribution would set at a minimum 8.5% of the Council Tax due (subject to Member approval). By setting this limit, the Council's proposed Scheme was expected to meet the Government's qualifying criteria for the transitional grant which the Government had introduced to limit the impact on working age claimants of the significant reduction in Government funding for Council Tax Benefits to local authorities to be introduced from April 2013.

The planned technical changes to discounts and exemptions for empty properties and second homes would increase the Council Tax income to the authority which would be used to reduce the amount of the Government Funding reduction (referred to above) that had to be passed

through to working age CTRS claimants.

Resolved:- (1) That the maximum CTRS support be set at 91.5% in order to meet the qualifying criteria for the Government Transitional Grant and that the Council applies for Transitional Grant funding in 2013/14 be approved.

(2) That the proposed new Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) be approved.

(3) That the proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions be approved.

(4) That the South Yorkshire Joint Authorities be notified of the Council's decisions.

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Akhtar

A81 SCRUTINY UPDATE

Councillor Whelbourn, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, welcomed the opportunity to give an update on activity.

The Select Commissions were on track with the delivery of their annual work programme for 2012/13. To date over 60% of the work programme was complete with the remainder of the scheduled meetings programmed to deal with the outstanding programme.

Six scrutiny reviews had been completed so far, either full or spotlight, and a progress report to the Management Board recently stating that it was ahead of schedule for completion.

The Management Board itself had completed its work around Fuel Poverty, the timing of which had proved crucial given the current Welfare Reform agenda and the potential impact that this would have on families living in poverty in Rotherham. It was hoped that the recommendations would be considered as part of the wider strategy the Council was adopting to tackle this issue. The Board was particularly proud of the way in which Scrutiny had been able to engage some of the Utility companies positively in the debate.

Two key themes for the Board in 2012/13 had been Equalities and Community Safety both with further sessions planned for later in the year and Equalities to be the subject of a spotlight review.

The draft Flooding Strategy would be considered next week with the hope of engaging with the Water Companies.

Resolved:- That the update on the work of Scrutiny be noted.

