

**COUNCIL MEETING
11th September, 2013**

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor John Foden) (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Ali, Andrews, Astbury, Barron, Beaumont, Beck, Buckley, Burton, Clark, Currie, Dalton, Dodson, Donaldson, Doyle, Ellis, Gilding, Godfrey, Gosling, J. Hamilton, N. Hamilton, Havenhand, Hussain, Jepson, Kaye, Lakin, McNeely, Middleton, Pickering, Pitchley, Read, Robinson, Roche, Roddison, Rushforth, G. A. Russell, P. A. Russell, R. S. Russell, Sangster, Sims, Smith, Steele, Stone, Swift, Tweed, Vines, Wallis, Watson, Whysall, Wootton and Wyatt.

A29 PRESENTATION OF AWARDS

The Mayor was pleased to present the following awards:-

- APSE - Service Award 2013 recognising excellence in local government frontline services, which saw Rotherham win the national award for Best Service Team – Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting.
- “Improving the Business Mix” for the Retail Investment Team from the Association of Town Centre Management.

Congratulations were offered to all those involved in gaining these awards.

A30 COUNCIL MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24th July, 2013, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Smith

A31 COMMUNICATIONS

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

- Containing 406 signatures from local people requesting that consideration be given to Rotherham By The Sea being returned to a two week long event rather than one week.
- Containing 945 signatures and 70 emails from local people highlighting the value of the Ministry of Food which has remained closed.
- Containing 112 signatures from residents against the opposition to the cutting of the No. 4 bus service.
- Containing a substantial number of signatures from local people requesting an independent enquiry into the past case of child sexual exploitation.

(2) The Chief Executive submitted apologies for absence from Councillors Akhtar, Falvey, Gouly, Hoddinott, Johnston, Lelliott, Mannion, Sharman and Whelbourn.

A32 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The question from the member of the public was withdrawn.

A33 CABINET MINUTES

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet (Section C) (pages 1C to 10C) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Smith

A34 DELEGATED POWERS

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

- Children, Young People and Families Services – Pages 1D to 15D (Section D)
- Communities and Cohesion – Pages 1E to 4E (Section E)
- Culture and Tourism – Pages 1F to 6F (Section F)
- Regeneration and Development – Pages 1G to 7G (Section G)
- Adult Social Care – Pages 1H to 7H (Section H)
- Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods – Pages 1J to 6J (Section J)
- Health and Wellbeing – Pages 1K to 4K (Section K)
- Waste and Emergency Planning – Pages 1L to 8L (Section L)
- Deputy Leader – Pages 1N to 5N (Section N)

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Smith

A35 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee (Section P) (pages 1P to 3P) be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Sangster

Seconder: Councillor Kaye

A36 LICENSING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Board (Section Q) (Pages 1Q to 6Q) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Wootton

Seconder:- Councillor Barron

A37 HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board (Section S) (pages 1S to 7S) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Wyatt

Seconder:- Councillor Doyle

A38 PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board (Section T) (pages 1T to 16T) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Pickering

Seconder:- Councillor Dodson

A39 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN

(1) Councillor Vines asked why was Rotherham Council not using the secondary schools to hold parent/grandparent evenings to promote awareness training into identifying child grooming to enlighten parents what signs they needed to be looking for and a route to reporting there concerns. Surely these were the ones that should be targeted.

Councillor Lakin confirmed that Rotherham Council was already carrying out considerable work through schools to support schools, children, young people and parents to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and help identify and refer young people who might be at risk or experiencing child sexual exploitation.

Rotherham Council and South Yorkshire Police have been working with secondary schools across the borough to help staff and students understand what child sexual exploitation was, how to protect children and young people from it and how to report concerns. The Team Manager from the Child Sexual Exploitation Team had attended the Schools Forum to work with school representatives responsible for PHSE (Personal Social and Health Education) understand child sexual exploitation and provide support and guidance to parents, carers and pupils. Many schools have a CEOP (Child Exploitation and On-Line Protection) Co-ordinator who works with students and parents/carers.

Leaflets were available for young people and parents/carers about child sexual exploitation in Rotherham schools and they also have access to information through the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) website.

Feedback from young people, parents, schools, youth workers and other organisations working with them was that rather than just giving specific information about child sexual exploitation, it needed to be incorporated as part of the broader PHSE curriculum in a wider programme of education for young people, parents and carers about how to manage the potential risks in the community, including substance abuse, domestic abuse and sexual health matters.

Over the last six months 126 staff from different organisations working with children have undertaken Local Safeguarding Board training on child sexual exploitation. These include staff working in and with schools and also all Elected Members apart from three. The training included awareness raising, recognising signs of child sexual exploitation and referring children and young people to Children's Social Care where there were safeguarding concerns. The 'Space Group' had been run for parents and carers who have children who have been victims of child sexual exploitation. The largest proportion of referrals to children's social care and the sexual exploitation team were from schools, which demonstrated their understanding of their role and what they were seeing.

It was now more evident that there was more opportunity to work with parents and carers, which was why there was wider commitment to prioritise and discuss child sexual exploitation within the Council and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Sub-Group. This had also been placed as an agenda item at the next meeting of the Secondary Head Teachers.

(2) Councillor Middleton asked what was the present cost of leasing/hiring the official foreign cars provided for the Mayor and the Leader and when was it intended to change them?

The Leader confirmed that a tender exercise, in accordance with Standing Orders, for the lease of two new civic cars had been completed and was based on a four year lease which was now common practice.

Four car manufacturers responded to the tender and Audi (Doncaster) scored most favourably on price and quality. The future cost of leasing the two new civic cars amounted to £11,268 per annum and was £561 per annum less than the previous payments, which also included servicing and tyres.

The BMW 5 Series was replaced on the 31st July, 2013 and the BMW 7 series would be replaced on the 14th October, 2013.

(3) Councillor Gilding asked how much was being budgeted for the independent enquiry into this Council's handling of the child-grooming scandal?

The Leader confirmed, as Councillor Gilding would know, he announced the intention to have an independent inquiry into historic cases of child sexual exploitation at the Cabinet meeting on 4th September, 2013. At that meeting the Chief Executive was tasked with bringing the detailed terms of reference back to Cabinet on 18th September, 2013.

Good progress was being made. Enquiries have been made to reputable bodies to provide recommendations to the Council on people with suitable standing and independence to undertake the Inquiry. The terms of reference were also being prepared and would be presented to Cabinet on the 18th September, 2013 as had been asked.

Once these matters have been concluded the Leader would be in a better position to advise Councillor Gilding on budget provision. However, the costs of the inquiry would be met from the Council's revenue budget.

The Leader hoped that Councillor Gilding would share his view that this was an important matter. Consequently the key consideration was that the inquiry was properly conducted by an appropriate independent person who could command public confidence and who was able to present to the Council an appropriate analysis of what had gone wrong in the past.

It was critical in moving forward that there was a clear understanding of lessons to be learned, not just for this Council, but also to be made available to all other agencies charged with protecting young people from these vile criminal acts.

(4) Councillor Vines asked who went on the trip to Romania and what qualified them to go on this trip funded by the tax payer?

Councillor Vines had two questions on the same subject. A full answer to both questions would be provided at Question 7.

(5) Councillor Middleton referred to a question of the dismaying appearance and state of Firsby Reservoirs which was raised some months ago, since when no restoration had been carried out. What plans were there to restore them and attract back to them the formerly abundant wildlife, which had disappeared?

Councillor Wyatt confirmed that this was a force of circumstances following the urgent safety works undertaken at the end of 2012 due to concerns about the integrity of the main dam at Firsby Reservoir a 'Section 10' inspection was carried out by the All Reservoirs Panel Engineer (APRE) in accordance with the provisions of the Reservoirs Act, 1975. This required further works to be carried out to the reservoir, but recognised various options were available. Works needed to be complete by the end of 2015.

These options were currently being evaluated, and in particular, the impact on wildlife and landscape, although the site had 'greened up' and

recovered significantly since the works were undertaken. Other considerations such as capital cost, future inspection, management and maintenance costs, would also feature in the appraisal of the options available. When a preferred option and funding has been identified, it would be reported to Members for approval in the normal manner.

(6) Councillor Gilding asked did the Council bear any risks in view of the financial situation of its bankers, the Co-operative Bank?

Councillor Wyatt reported that in the worst case scenario that the Co-operative Bank should not be able to continue to trade, under the Banking Act, 2009, banking services to local authorities were regarded as a critical function and the Bank of England would, therefore, prioritise their continuation to prevent disruption.

As far as financial risk was concerned, the Council's Treasury Management and Investment Strategy placed security at its heart over investment return. The Strategy allowed the Council to deposit money with a range of counterparties including the Co-operative Bank. However, operationally, the Council invested wherever possible with the Government's Debt Management Office.

(7) Councillor Vines asked what was the purpose of the visit to Romania, what benefit did the tax payers of Rotherham who part funded this little jolly get from this trip, what was the full cost of this trip and what was Rotherham tax payers contribution in clouding full transport costs?

The Leader confirmed that there have been no direct costs to the Council.

The costs were broken down as follows:-

- The full costs of the stay within Romania were met by the host City. Consequently the Council had not needed to bear any of the costs.
- The full costs of travel of the delegation to and from Romania were met by European Funding specifically allocated for this purpose. Consequently the Council had not needed to bear any of these costs.
- The cost of Officer and Member time was already accommodated within the Council's revenue budget and consequently did not comprise a direct cost. It was, however, an indirect cost as it was true that Officers and Members could have been doing other things. However, even these indirect costs were very limited. The reason for this was that the majority of the visit occurred across a weekend and a bank holiday. The Members and Officers freely gave up their family time because they felt there would be a benefit to Rotherham citizens.

- In order to fully cover the issue of costs the Leader added that the total costs met from European Funding for travel and sundries amounted to £12,689.35

Now turning to the issue of attendance. The visit to Romania was by direct invitation of the Mayor of Cluj Napoca to the specific named individuals. This was because the City of Cluj Napoca clearly believed that the individuals concerned had a specific set of skills and abilities that would assist in both developing and sharing best practice across a range of disciplines. The Members and Officers attending were:-

- Councillor Roger Stone, as Leader of the Council.
- Mr. Martin Kimber, the Chief Executive
- Councillors Mahroof Hussain and John Doyle, both Cabinet Members.
- Mr. Tom Cray, Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services.
- Mr. John Radford, Director of Public Health.

The experience and abilities of all of these people were self evident and needed no further explanation. All have key roles in the running of the Council which had a non-schools budget in excess of £220 million pounds annually, and which had responsibility for delivering in excess of 700 services.

The Leader was sure that the Council Chamber would recognise that people involved in Leadership and Management of an organisation of this scale would have transferrable skills that would be both recognised and in demand by others.

Councillor Vines asked about benefits of the visit. The Leader gave a flavour, but was aware that the visit had led to significant follow up action and it was for others rather than him to exhort the benefits of this. To explain further:-

1. As a consequence of the visit both organisations were able to gain greater knowledge of and share best practice relating to the Roma which form part of both communities. Members involved in the planning and delivery of services for diverse communities would know how important it was to have a clear and wide view about distinctive community needs.
2. Experience of different social care systems were shared and some of the ideas would assist in Rotherham in future service provision. Members involved in attempting to grapple with the single biggest problem facing us as a nation of managing the significant demographic pressures associated with an ageing population would know how important it was not to turn our back on ideas from other nations

3. A range of business contacts were made along with developing ideas regarding the best way for the relationship to grow the economy within Rotherham. Members involved in economic growth and local government finance would know about being at the heart of the worst economic crisis of modern times. Rotherham needed to do everything it could to generate opportunities for growth of businesses and jobs in Rotherham. This initial visit by the Rotherham delegation had led directly to further visits to Romania by Rotherham businesses including the Chamber of Commerce to develop the trading links identified and developed. This in turn would lead to the safeguarding and growth of jobs in Rotherham.

The Leader reiterated that he could speak in further detail about the benefits, but did not intend to do so. Actions spoke louder than words and he knew that Rotherham businesses would soon be making public announcements following their most recent visit. It was important that their thunder was not stolen.

When the announcements were made the Leader was sure Councillor Vines would be one of the first to congratulate him and other attendees for forging the relationship with Cluj Napoca and recognising the opportunities and benefits that international links could bring for Rotherham.

(8) Councillor Middleton asked following the revelation in Rotherham, 874 children of school age were not registered at school for the new term, did the Cabinet Member agree 'supporting parents to take up educational opportunities' was not sufficient when there was a legal requirement for children to be registered at, and sent to a specific school?

Councillor Lakin agreed with Councillor Middleton.

(9) Councillor Vines asked why were Rotherham Council leasing playing fields to Private Profit making Companies for a sum of just £1.00 per year for up to 25 year leases. What benefit did this bring to the tax payer, or were the Council run by the idiot school of economics and good business practice?

Councillor Rushforth explained that all requests for leases under the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy were subject to the same assessment of eligibility. This included a requirement that the proposed lessee was a not-for-profit organisation and was able to take on full maintenance responsibility for the land or building. The Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Review Team (CSART) was responsible for judging all such proposals to determine whether they met the qualifying criteria. An annual rent of £1.00 was established as part of the Council's Asset Transfer Policy.

Part of the recreation ground at School Lane, Parkgate was the subject of such a proposal that had already been approved by CSART. The

prospective lessee was Inzone (Yorkshire) Community Interest Company which was a non-profit making social enterprise. Inzone's stated aims centred on creating opportunities for children and young people to participate in high quality physical activity, regardless of gender, ability and social circumstance. This would include small-sided soccer and other sports and formation of clubs, leagues and tournaments. The organisation also aimed to provide advice on healthy eating, consequences of substance abuse and oral hygiene. These aims were aligned well to corporate priorities, and would be of benefit to local communities in Rawmarsh, Parkgate and beyond.

A40 QUESTIONS TO SPOKESPERSONS

There were none.