

**COUNCIL MEETING
8th July, 2015**

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor Maggi Clark) (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Ali, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Buckley, Burton, Cowles, Currie, Cutts, Ellis, Evans, Finnie, Fleming, Gosling, Hague, Hamilton, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jepson, Johnston, Jones, Khan, Lelliott, Mallinder, McNeely, Middleton, Parker, Pickering, Price, Read, Reeder, Roche, Roddison, Rose, Rosling, Rushforth, Sansome, Steele, John Turner, Julie Turner, C. Vines, M. Vines, Wallis, Watson, Whelbourn, Whysall, Wyatt and Yasseen.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were reported:-

Councillor Jepson declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 13 (Standards Committee) on the grounds that he was a member of a Parish Council that was referred to in the minutes.

Councillors Khan and Yasseen declared disclosable pecuniary interests in Agenda Item 7 (Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy) on the grounds of being involved with or knowing someone in the licensing trade and withdrew from the room whilst that item was discussed.

29. COUNCIL MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 3rd June, 2015, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read Seconder: Councillor Watson

30. COMMUNICATIONS

(1) The Managing Director submitted the following petitions which had been referred to the appropriate Directorates for consideration:-

- Containing 17 signatures from residents of Brameld Road, Rawmarsh, requesting CCTV, Police monitoring and patrols.
- Containing 105 signatures from residents requesting resurfacing works to the roads of Broom Avenue, Middle Lane South and Badsley Moor Lane.

(2) The Managing Director submitted apologies for absence from Councillors Ahmed, Elliot, Pitchley, Reynolds, Robinson, Russell, Sims, Smith, Taylor and Tweed.

(3) Councillor Beck reported on the positive work taking place in the town centre including the erection of the Heart of Steel sculpture, extension of the Tuesday market and the award to Patchwork Pig of High Street for the Regional Retailer of the Year.

31. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

(1) Mr. R. Bartle referred to the last Rotherham South meeting where an Asian gentleman from Eastwood said he wanted to leave Eastwood because he was fed up at the level of eastern European prostitution and general state of the area, his house was worthless and he was trapped and asked what did the Leader have to say.

The Leader explained the Borough was facing big challenges. Colleagues from Streetpride, Community Protection, Children and Young People's Services and Area Assembly staff were working together with Elected Members and the Clifton Partnership to tackle major issues.

In a supplementary question Mr. Bartle referred to the migration issues in Eastwood, the clean-up operations, the additional waste collections, the increased costs and the criminal activity taking place.

The Leader advised that should Mr. Bartle be aware of any criminal activity taking place this should be reported to the Police. Any other issues identified by Mr. Bartle could be provided to the Leader in writing for him to deal with.

In terms of the migration in Rotherham the Leader had met with many people in the Eastwood community. They had come to this country to work and their contributions supported the local economy.

(2) Mr. M. Eyre referred to the Council's website where it stated that "to meet the national standard of decent homes" a Council house must be free from damp and asked could the Council tell him if the Council housing in East Dene was free from damp.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, confirmed the Council's housing stock exceeded 21,000 homes and it was probable that at any one time a small number may have an issue with damp. The housing in East Dene was traditional brick built and suffered from no more damp problems than average. However, the Council was investing £5.9 million on roofing and insulation in East Dene - £3 million spent to date and £2.9 million planned in 2015-16, which would minimise any problems with condensation.

In a supplementary question Mr. Eyre gave two examples of families with children suffering with damp in East Dene, which were causing health issues. He believed these families were being ignored by the Council and found this situation unacceptable that families were having to live in these conditions and wished to know what action could be taken to prevent further neglect.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, asked the member of the public to provide details on these families and she would speak to the relevant people involved to investigate.

(3) Mr. D. McMillan asked, whilst acknowledging the pre-eminence of addressing overall governance and CSE issues, what assurances could all parties give that they would work together with any new Chief Executive and senior departmental management to ensure that concomitant Council responsibilities were not adversely affected.

The Leader thanked the member of the public for his question and confirmed that child sexual exploitation was a top priority for the Council.

The Council's Improvement Plan detailed a range of measures across the Local Authority to address the issues with governance and leadership which would ensure the delivery of best value and continuous improvement across all services.

In a supplementary question Mr. McMillan referred to child sexual exploitation going on for many years and asked, given the 300 further cases identified since the Commissioners had been appointed, at what stage would the executive powers of the Council transfer from the Commissioners back to staff.

The Leader pointed out the decision to transfer executive powers back to Elected Members would lie with the Secretary of State once good progress had been demonstrated.

An assurance was given that every effort was being made to support services where possible given the budget pressures.

32. HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE LICENSING POLICY

Further to the meeting of Commissioner Ney and the Advisory Licensing Board held on 29th June, 2015, consideration was given to a report which detailed the proposed Policy in relation to Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing scheduled for implementation on 6th July, 2015 (subject to the receipt of representations against the decision).

The proposed Policy was the result of the largest overhaul of the Council's licensing policy and practice ever to have taken place. Once implemented the Policy was designed to bring about significant improvement in the regulation of the taxi and private hire trade in Rotherham and ensure that the standard of drivers, vehicles and operators were improved.

As a result of the responses received during the consultation, and discussions with the Advisory Licensing Board and licensed trade representatives, Commissioner Ney made a number of amendments to the Policy which Members of the Council were urged to support.

Clarification was sought on various matters including the issuing of receipts and the use of non-Rotherham licensed drivers and were informed by Commissioner Ney that receipts would only be issued on request. In terms of the use of non-Rotherham licensed drivers, the Policy did stipulate licensed drivers from Rotherham, but it was hoped in time this could be enforced across South Yorkshire.

Support was expressed to the Policy in order to protect some of the most vulnerable in society who used taxi services through the use of CCTV.

There was a suggestion that there be more improved communication and race relations to iron out some of the difficulties in the Policy.

Resolved:- (1) That the Revised RMBC Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to this report) be noted.

(2) That Commissioner Ney's decisions with regard to the policy (minded to decision notice attached as Appendix 2) be noted.

Mover:- Councillor Ellis

Seconder:- Councillor Wallis

(Councillors' Khan and Yasseen declared disclosable pecuniary interests on the grounds of being involved with or knowing someone in the licensing trade and withdrew from the room whilst this item was discussed)

(Councillors Alam, Ali, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Buckley, Burton, Cowles, Currie, Cutts, Ellis, Evans, Finnie, Fleming, Gosling, Hague, J. Hamilton, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jepson, Johnston, Jones, Lelliott, Mallinder, McNeely, Middleton, Parker, Pickering, Price, Read, Reeder, Roche, Roddison, Rose, Rosling, Rushforth, Sansome, Steele, Turner, Turner, C. Vines, M. Vines, Wallis, Watson, Whelbourn, Whysall and Wyatt supported the Policy adoption)

(Councillor Ali abstained from the vote)

33. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Steele, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, presented the Annual Report for 2014-15 for approval.

The Annual Report set out the key achievements for the 2014-15 Scrutiny function of the Council and looked back to capture some outcomes attributable to previous completed reviews.

Many changes had occurred in the last few months and tribute was paid to Councillors Currie and Whelbourn for their support to the Scrutiny function.

Resolved:- (1) That the draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2014-15 be approved.

(2) That membership details for 2015/16 reflect any changes made at the Council meeting on the 8th July, 2015 and be included in the final published version.

Mover:- Councillor Steele Second:- Councillor Hamilton

34. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report detailing the Local Development Scheme setting out the project plan for the preparation, adoption and review of the Rotherham Local Plan.

The report outlined an update to the Local Development Scheme which had been produced to reflect the revised timetable for publication and submission of the Sites and Policies document to Government.

Councillors Parker, John Turner and C. Vines were unable to support the Scheme whilst ever consideration was being given to development on Green Belt land.

Resolved:- That the revised Local Development Scheme be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Lelliott Second:- Councillor Atkin

35. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP) PROFILE

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the work being undertaken to review and amend the current profile for reducing the Council's underlying need to borrow (Capital Financing Requirement - CFR) through the annual Minimum Revenue Provision charge to revenue (MRP) in respect of capital expenditure incurred prior to 2007/08 which was funded by borrowing. This identified short to medium term revenue benefits and sought approval.

The report also outlined a proposal to utilise unapplied capital resources to achieve short-term revenue benefits by repaying existing debt and sought approval for this to be applied in the 2014/15 financial year.

Resolved:- (1) That the re-profiling of the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision charge for reducing the Council's underlying need to borrow on capital expenditure incurred prior to 2007/08, which was funded from borrowing, and the transfer of the identified short-term revenue benefits to a new Council earmarked reserve titled 'MRP Adjustment Reserve' be approved.

(2) That an amendment be made to the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement applicable in 2014/15 and future financial years, the revised wording for paragraph (a) of the Policy Statement to be:-

"The MRP charge in relation to capital expenditure incurred prior to 2007/08 where the expenditure was funded by either supported or unsupported borrowing will be calculated using the expected useful life of the asset and the calculation of the provision will be by the annuity method."

(3) That the use of unapplied capital resources to reduce the Council's underlying need to borrow be approved and for this to be applied in the 2014/15 financial year.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Secunder:- Councillor Watson

36. SCHEME OF DELEGATION AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Consideration was given to a report which recommended the updating of the Scheme of Delegation and the revision of the Council's Financial Regulations following the appointment of the Commissioners by the Secretaries of State.

There was some confusion with the electronic version of the documents being circulated by email, but these were for information only. Hard copies of the revised Scheme of Delegation had been provided in each of the respective Group Rooms with a copy for inspection left on Reception at the Town Hall. Further copies could be requested via the Monitoring Officer.

Resolved:- That the revised officer Scheme of Delegation and the revised Financial Regulations be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Secunder:- Councillor Watson

37. REVISED MEMBERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS 2015/16

Consideration was given to a report which detailed suggested revisions to the appointment of Members to the Committees, Boards and Panels of the Council, in accordance with the requirements of political balance.

Resolved:- That the revisions to the appointments to Committees, Boards and Panels of the Council be approved as follows:-

Sheffield City Region – Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield Combined Authority

Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Steele plus Councillor Cowles

Audit Committee –Councillor Wyatt plus Councillor Cowles

Improving Lives Select Commission:-

For Councillor Reeder to replace Councillor John Turner

For Councillor Jepson to replace Councillor Burton

Health Select Commission:-

For Councillor John Turner to replace Councillor Reeder

For Councillor Parker to replace Councillor Ellis

Members' Training and Development Panel:-

To include Councillor Jepson

Planning Board:-

For Councillor Cutts to replace Councillor M. Vines

Appeal and Grievance Panels:-

To include Councillor Parker

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

38. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Standards Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Beck

Seconder:- Councillor Hughes

(Councillor Jepson declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was now Chairman of Anston Parish Council, which was referred to in the minutes, and indicated he would be making a written submission on comments made about the Parish Council at the previous meeting)

39. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board and tribute paid to all those involved in the independent review into suicide.

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Roche Seconder:- Councillor Watson

40. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Atkin Seconder:- Councillor Roche

41. QUESTIONS TO SPOKESPERSONS

There were none.

42. QUESTIONS TO ADVISORY CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN

(1) Councillor John Turner asked with regard to the introduction of videoing of meetings being a major move towards democracy, did this ruling apply to Parish Councils or was it optional.

The Leader explained Parish Councils were not obliged to webcast their meetings, but they were obliged to permit filming, photographing and audio recording.

The Council also supported the extension of the webcasting of meetings and was extending webcasting from Council, Cabinet, Planning Board and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings to all Scrutiny Commissions and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Councillor John Turner referred to the difficulties within some Parish Council meetings and asked the Leader to lobby for any funding to support the filming of Parish Council meetings.

(2) Councillor John Turner asked, since the evacuation of the multi-million pound Bailey House and its now seemingly desultory usage, what was the plan.

The Leader explained Bailey House was fully occupied on every floor, and contained a number of services:-

- Ground floor - Corporate Print Room, Streetpride Town Centre Cleaning Team and storage, museum workshop, store and fine arts store.
- First floor - Corporate Post Room (approximately 1/3rd of floor space, Elections Office and preparation area (1/3rd floor area), Bibliographical/ Library book store (approximately 1/3rd of floor space, Corporate archives (remaining floor area)).

- Second Floor - GMB Office, Emergency Planning store and Corporate Records Management.
- Third Floor - Cultural store and security store, Schools' Connect Team, further general storage.

In a supplementary question Councillor John Turner referred to the largescale space within Bailey House and asked if the Leader agreed with him that it was bad asset usage.

The Leader could not agree with Councillor John Turner and pointed out that building management was being looked at moving forward.

(3) Councillor C. Vines asked why was Habershon House put up for sale and staff informed of sale, who was responsible for this and who gave the authority for the sale and again why was it Opposition Members had to read the Advertiser to be informed of this?

The Leader confirmed at no point had Habershon House been put up for sale nor had staff been informed that the house was up for sale. The report in the Advertiser followed a meeting between the Local Authority officers and staff at Habershon House inappropriately suggesting that Habershon House was to be closed. It would appear that following this meeting someone then approached the Advertiser with this misinformation.

This meeting took place with no authorisation or knowledge of either Elected Members or the Commissioners. The Strategic Director had investigated how this miscommunication occurred and had put checks in place to ensure there was no repeat.

Councillor C. Vines in a supplementary question asked could the Advertiser be approached to print a retraction on the misleading information.

The Leader indicated the Advertiser could be asked.

(4) Councillor C. Vines asked why and what was the reason for so many personal and intrusive questions being asked of prospective new Council tenants such questions as where do they buy their clothes - M & S or Matalan and where do they shop for food. What had this got to do with the Council's housing staff.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, explained prospective tenants were asked to complete an income and expenditure form at both application and offer stage of the allocation process. This was to ensure that Council properties were affordable and sustainable to them. The income and expenditure form asked how much was spent on food and clothing, but did not ask specifically where the customer shopped.

The income and expenditure process assisted applicants to understand the cost of running a home and what a Rotherham Council tenant was required to pay to sustain their tenancy.

(5) Councillor C. Vines asked had the survey of the damp and mould (*sic*) issues in Council housing stock been completed, what was the outcome and what action was being put in place to remedy this problem made worse since the decent homes programme was completed as this problem was now causing many tenants' health problems.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, explained no such survey existed. Rotherham had 21,000 Council homes and a number of these homes have a problem with condensation and mould related issues. The main cause of this related to poor ventilation of moisture within the property rather than damp arising out of a failure of the physical fabric of the building.

The Council was trying to deal with these problems proactively. For example, all technical staff have been specifically trained in detecting damp and a significant amount of money was being invested to improve the insulation of the most thermally inefficient properties through external wall insulation, cavity wall and top-up roof insulation programmes. This work made stock far easier to heat and less expensive to keep warm and reduced the likelihood of cold surfaces in the property which attracted moisture. The Council was also replacing extractor fans with humidity sensitive fans and where there were obvious issues of tenants creating moisture, but not ventilating appropriately, advice was being provided to tenants.

The Council's housing team also worked with colleagues in Public Health to reduce the incidence of fuel poverty and helped to keep people warm during the winter months. This work was targeted at the most vulnerable tenants. This included advice and guidance on how to operate central heating systems efficiently. As part of this all the Council's repair operatives have been trained to offer basic advice on issues relating to fuel poverty and were aware of where to signpost tenants who needed specific assistance with this issue.

Councillor C. Vines pointed out that the issues were to do with mould and not condensation and offered to escort the Advisory Cabinet Member around the properties so she could view for herself.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, welcomed such an opportunity and would arrange a suitable date/time in her diary.

(6) Councillor C. Vines referred to Councillor McNeely's report to Cabinet on selective licensing where it mentioned that landlords were implicated in child sexual exploitation and asked was there any evidence to support this and what evidence was there to say that landlords could not be trusted to self-regulate.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, referred to Councillor McNeely presenting two reports to Cabinet on the Selective Licensing Scheme. The first on the 27th November, 2013 (Minute No. 131) presented the business case for selective licensing and requested permission to go to public consultation, the second presented on the 19th March, 2014, gave an initial indication of the consultation outcome (Minute No. 216). Neither of these reports suggested that landlords were implicated in child sexual exploitation.

Selective Licensing was a tool available to Local Authorities to raise standards in the private rented sector. The Authority had taken the view that in the areas of concern, this mechanism was the only reliable way to ensure that all landlords met the same basic standards. Previous attempts at self-regulated accreditation have been shown to be ineffective. This matter was considered as part of the Judicial Review held in the High Court, which found in the Council's favour.

In a supplementary question Councillor C. Vines referred to a minute of a meeting of the Majority Group and was informed this was not a Council meeting.

(7) Councillor C. Vines referred to the private sector housing forum set up by the Council twelve months ago and asked how many meetings have been held, how many landlords were informed and how many had signed up to the landlord accreditation scheme to date.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, explained the Council had not set up a private sector housing forum. The landlords did, however, hold a private sector landlord forum which the Council was often asked to contribute to and was happy to do so. This meeting was held approximately three times a year and organised jointly by the National Landlord Association (NLA) and the local private sector landlord group, Rotherham and District Residential Landlord Association (R&DRLA).

The Council had contributed to this forum since its re-establishment early in 2013.

The Council did not offer a landlord accreditation scheme, but now operated the Selective Licensing Scheme in certain areas.

(8) Councillor C. Vines asked, with the introduction of taxis having to install cameras in the taxis, which he endorsed fully, could the Advisory Cabinet Member please assure him that no loans or grant funding or any tax payers funding would be made available to taxi operators or drivers with them saying they could not afford them.

The Leader gave Councillor C. Vines the assurance that no taxpayers funding would be made available.

(9) Councillor C. Vines asked with regard to high profile of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham could the Advisory Cabinet Member please confirm if all housing officers, workforce and contractors who visited schools and Council housing were CRB checked.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, reported that all employees and volunteers working for the Council who would have unsupervised access to vulnerable groups, whether in schools, Council or private homes and establishments, have the appropriate DBS checks undertaken in accordance with the requirements and definitions applying to DBS and to Safeguarding. Contractor's employees were required to comply on the same basis.

In the context of schools and Council housing, the role or activity that a person performed dictated whether a DBS check could or should be undertaken. Consequently not all employees, or contractors, who visited schools or Council housing would be eligible to have a DBS check undertaken.

In a supplementary comment Councillor C. Vines suggested that as a matter of course would it not make sense to ensure all those working in these environments were DBS checked. He had a few ideas and was happy to share these with the Advisory Cabinet Member.

(10) Councillor M. Vines referred to the recent press release from the National Crime Agency where it stated 'We have 47 boxes of written material from Risky Business which contain nearly 1500 written files.' It also goes on to state it had a further 45 boxes and asked where have they come from as it was thought they had all been stolen.

The Leader explained in its press release, the National Crime Agency was referring to the full volume of material it had access to as part of Operation Stovewood. The National Crime Agency press release stated that the further 45 boxes have been obtained by following links - from the 47 boxes of Risky Business files - to "information from other sources and within other investigations".

References to missing or stolen files from the Risky Business Office as referred to in the relevant reports amounted to only a very small number of files that were alleged to have been removed from the Risky Business premises.

In a supplementary question Councillor M. Vines asked why had these files not been found before to prevent the victims suffering further distress.

The Leader was waiting on the outcome of an Audit Report and once the details were received the information would be shared.

(11) Councillor M. Vines asked why was there a charge of £13 being made to set up a direct debit for the new private landlord scheme when it cost nothing to do this with other utility companies who also rewarded for this method of payment?

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, explained the additional fee added to instalment payment plans for selective licencing represented the actual cost to the service of raising invoices and direct debits levied from the sundry accounts service as well as the time to generate and process invoice payments. The cost of this was not built into the normal license fee as to spread the cost across all license applications would have been unfair to those who chose to pay in advance.

In a supplementary question Councillor M. Vines asked if a discount was provided for paying by direct debit and she was advised by the Advisory Cabinet Member that there was not.

(12) Councillor M. Vines asked now it was into July how many landlords have been inspected and been issued with their license.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, confirmed the first licenses were expected to be issued during this month.

The first inspections would also take place this month. These were to ensure that homes were compliant with license conditions and that improvements were made as early as possible in the life of the scheme.

(13) Councillor Hoddinott referred to a few months ago Leaders of all parties in the Chamber supporting a voluntary sector funding bid for the Base Project and asked could the Leader explain the outcome of that bid and what the Council was doing to support the voluntary sector in tackling Child Sexual Exploitation?

The Leader paid tribute to the work of the former Deputy Leader and the Cabinet and confirmed that, following a successful bid to Ministry Of Justice for funding, the Children Young People and Families Consortium had been allocated £262,000 to extend the capacity of existing services to support delivery of child sexual exploitation services in Rotherham. The Council supported the writing of the bid and had funded the marketing of the service.

Ten member organisations of the Children, Young People and Families Consortium identified “hotspots” for child sexual exploitation and had been identified as The Base Projects. These were:-

- Swinton Lock
- Activate (The High Street Centre, Rawmarsh)
- YWCA Fleming Gardens
- Safe@Last
- Barnardo's
- Clifton Learning Partnership
- GROW
- Rotherham Women's Refuge
- YMCA - My Place
- Kimberworth Park Community Partnership

The organisations would be providing counselling and 1:1 support to attend counselling sessions, family support and family therapy, support to access Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), help with benefits and housing issues and therapy work in the form of art, poetry and music.

Councillor Hoddinott welcomed the news about the successful bid for support to work with victims and survivors. In a supplementary question expressed concern that this was short term funding and asked the Leader what support was being provided to these organisations to ensure they provided the necessary services for many years to come.

The Leader confirmed additional funding had been added to the base budget to provide for the long term support to victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation. Information had been collated from the one year grant allocations and work was now taking place to ensure the right support was put in place. Robust exist strategies were being used to transfer services successfully for those providing long term support.

(14) Councillor Wallis asked could the Leader provide an update on the implementation of Selective Licensing, with particular reference to Eastwood?

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, explained there had been an extremely positive response from landlords. 505 applications have been received in the first two months of the scheme, which represented 40% of the anticipated licensable property. The highest uptake had been in Eastwood with almost 50% of licensable private rented property having had applications submitted.

The new Team Leader had been appointed and other posts were due to be appointed this month and this policy would have a positive impact for tenants in Rotherham.

In a supplementary question Councillor Wallis pointed out that in the absence of a Fair Rent Act this was the best approach the Council could take in order to protect vulnerable tenants and asked, given that only 50% of landlords had registered with the Council at this stage, what action was being taken to encourage registration.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, confirmed many landlords were awaiting the outcome of the Judicial Review, but the information required from landlords would be followed up during July.

(15) Councillor Atkin asked could the Leader of the Council inform Members in the last five years how many properties have been sold under the right to buy and how many have been replaced?

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, confirmed the number of Right to Buy sales over the last five years was 295. Over the same period the Council provided 153 replacements. In 2015/16 the Council negotiated a further 70 new homes which would be delivered later this financial year.

In a supplementary question Councillor Atkin asked if the Cabinet Member agreed, which she confirmed, that the Government should adopt a policy for replacing like for like properties that have been sold.

(16) Councillor Cowles referred to a press release on the 15th June, 2015, and in the Advertiser of that week and asked was the Leader aware that Basharat Hussain a CSE suspect skipped bail in the week prior to his court appearance and flew to Pakistan.

The Leader confirmed he was aware and had made enquiries subsequently with the Police.

There was a myth that Police had powers to remove passports from individuals who had not been charged with an offence and hold them for as long as the Force deems necessary. This was not possible where someone had not been charged with an offence and was answering his/her bail dates and where there was no actual intelligence (as in this case) to indicate he/she would seek to avoid justice. The Police were clear that such an application on human rights grounds would be overturned by any Judge.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles asked if since the question had been submitted whether contact had been made with District Commander Harwin to put the question to him.

The Leader pointed out that an all Member Seminar was scheduled for later in July giving a progress update to which District Commander Harwin and Ian Thomas would be in attendance.

(17) Councillor Cowles referred to the Rotherham Politics page on Taxi Licensing where it indicated that Sajid Bostan of Rotherham Private Hire Drivers said they had "fixed the Council, fixed the Police, fixed the Advertiser and fixed the local BBC" and asked what did the Leader know of this and could he prove that the statement made by Sajid should not be taken seriously?

The Leader was unable to comment never having met Mr. Bostan and he had not appeared to have fixed anything.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles asked for assurance that Mr. Bostan was not referring to Licensing.

The Leader confirmed he did not know Mr. Bostan.

(18) Councillor Cowles asked, following his request at the previous meeting to see the map detailing the proposed BT broadband implementation plan, had the Leader reviewed this plan and what did he think of it.

The Leader referred to the initial planned rollout of the implementation across South Yorkshire with the first area going live in Dinnington.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles referred to the implementation plan which had little coverage in 2015, a little more in 2016 with the bulk in 2017 and asked how many people paid for goods and services to have them delivered in three years.

The Leader explained this was a national scheme with other Local Authorities taking part to access high speed broadband. Everyone wanted to see this scheme delivered and it was hoped Rotherham would benefit from mass coverage in the next few years.

(19) Councillor Cowles asked did the Leader accept that politicians nationally and locally should learn from past mistakes and analyse what went wrong in order to prevent such mistakes happening again.

The Leader accepted this statement.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles referred to Digital Region and how this was dismissed as an I.T. project and asked that cash be generated to support services and asked how the Leader was expecting to tackle this.

The Leader explained little opportunity had been given to working on the Casey report, but suggested there be some cross cutting scrutiny to look at these issues.

(20) Councillor Cowles referred to a recent press article highlighting that a number of schools built by a national building contractor using PFI funding had been found with defects hazardous to children and asked did Rotherham have any schools constructed using such a funding source.

Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, confirmed the Schools PFI Project involved a partnership between the Council and Transform Schools (Rotherham) Ltd. The contract included the rebuilding/refurbishment of fourteen schools and their facilities management for a period of thirty years from 1st April, 2004.

The Schools were constructed by Balfour Beatty Construction.

The project has provided:-

- New schools for Coleridge, Ferham, Kimberworth, Maltby Craggs Infant, Maltby Craggs Junior, Meadowview and Thornhill Primaries and Winterhill, Wingfield and Wath Secondary Schools.
- Part new build and refurbished schools at East Dene and Wath Central Primaries and Clifton, Thrybergh and Wickersley Secondary Schools.

Additionally, extended school use has been provided as follows:-

- New Key Young Person's Centres were provided at Thornhill Primary and Wath Secondary Schools and significantly refurbished centres at Wingfield, Clifton, Thrybergh and Winterhill Secondary Schools.
- Sure Start facilities at Ferham, Thornhill and Wingfield.
- Space for Sports and Arts facilities at Ferham and Clifton.
- Children's Centres at Coleridge and Kimberworth.
- Clifton Project facilities at the Cranworth Road site (The Place).

All the schools were designed and constructed to DfE guidance and building regulations at the time of construction.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles asked if any of the schools had been built by Balfour Beatty and whether they had been asked to come back and give an assurance that there were no defects and that Rotherham children were safe at school.

Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, confirmed all the projects were Balfour Beatty Construction. The PFI providers had surveyed all the schools and had rectified or had a programme to rectify those defects which were

generally regarding roof designs and interfaces, none of which were hazardous to children and were safe.

(21) Councillor Cowles referred to fuel poverty being a national scandal, prepayment customers in particular paying as much as £400 per year more for supply versus direct debit customers and asked did the Leader agree that this Council should do everything possible to assist these people and protect the most vulnerable from this profiteering.

The Leader confirmed the issue of pre-payment meters was raised at the recent Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting (26th June, 2015) and the Council was deciding how best to communicate these messages to the wider public and informing them of alternative tariffs, which may reduce their fuel bills.

The Council did also offer support to residents who were struggling to afford heating and would give advice in relation to switching tariffs or negotiate with energy providers to re-schedule costs.

Councillor Cowles asked if the Leader would agree to lobby Members of Parliament again on this issue to look at local support schemes and how energy demands could be met.

The Leader confirmed he was happy to raise this issue with Members of Parliament and European Members of Parliament in terms of energy regeneration.

(22) Councillor Cowles confirmed he had corresponded over the past month in regard to the Magna business plan, and been denied a copy enabling him to review and comment on the effectiveness of the plan. He asked had the Leader seen a copy and if not why not as the Council were paying for the consultation study.

The Leader confirmed the issue was under discussion at this stage and he himself had not had sight of the Magna business plan as he was waiting for PwC to report back.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles queried why the Leader had not seen the Magna business plan as he had contacted Magna direct to be informed that Magna had not denied access, but it was the Council itself that had and asked who was being untruthful the Leader, Karl Battersby or the Business Manager at Magna.

The Leader confirmed he was happy to forward on the email trails onto Councillor Cowles, but in terms of the cost of the plan, it was correct to push Magna in the right direction at as minimal cost to the taxpayer and once the report was ready a view would be formed.

(23) Councillor Reeder asked had the Council given any planning permission for fracking to be undertaken and would they need planning permission.

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, confirmed that exploration for suitability of an area for fracking could only take place in areas where the Department of Energy and Climate Change had granted a license. Exploratory licenses for general petroleum exploration (which would cover fracking) existed around Maltby and Dinnington). The licences were granted in 2004, were renewed recently and lasted until 2029. They would allow exploratory works to be carried out but for any fracking operation there would need to be planning permission. It was confirmed that no planning applications have been submitted and the Council were not aware of any exploratory works.