

**COUNCIL MEETING
28th February, 2018**

Present:- The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Eve Rose Keenan) (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Albiston, Allcock, Allen, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Brookes, Buckley, Carter, Clark, Cooksey, Cowles, Cusworth, B. Cutts, D. Cutts, Elliot, M. Elliott, R. Elliott, Ellis, Fenwick-Green, Hoddinott, Ireland, Jarvis, Jones, Marles, Napper, Pitchley, Price, Read, Reeder, Rushforth, Sansome, Senior, Sheppard, Short, Simpson, Steele, Taylor, Julie Turner, Vjestica, Walsh, Watson, Williams, Wyatt and Yasseen.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

147. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor was pleased to share a written report on her activity since the last Council meeting. She particularly wanted to highlight, given this was her last full Council Meeting as Chair, the opening of the new underground cinema/theatre in the former Turf Tavern and the recent visit by the Rainbows who had painted and hid a special rock for Members to find in the Council Chamber.

The Mayor also wished to announce news about her own charity, Thornberry Animal Sanctuary, who had confirmed they would free up three spaces to accommodate dogs for homeless people providing assistance in often difficult circumstances.

148. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrews, Bird, Evans, Hague, Jepson, Lelliott, Khan, Mallinder, Marriott, McNeely, Russell, John Turner, Tweed and Whysall.

149. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications received.

150. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 24th January 2018, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Further to Minute No. 137 the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board confirmed the attendance of the Chief Fire Officer to discuss the second appliance in Rotherham at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board scheduled for Wednesday, 21st March, 2018 at 11.00 a.m.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

151. PETITIONS

The Mayor reported that one petition had been submitted, which had met the threshold for consideration by Council containing 6,569 signatures calling on the Council to ensure that there was adequate in-house services for vulnerable adults in Rotherham and to keep open the Addison and Oaks Day Centres.

Mr. Martin Badger addressed the Council as part of the presentation of the petition and outlined the merits, usage, level of support and high level of benefit to service users of these centres. The viability was not questionable and he urged the Council to carefully consider future provision and invited all Elected Members to visit the centres and view personally the activities and community benefit.

Councillor Roche, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, thanked Unison for the presentation of the petition and confirmed he had visited the centres on many occasions.

A report relating to the future proposals had not yet been drafted so it was not possible to pre-judge any outcome. The service was well supported and it was timely to review the provision following a period of consultation. There would be no changes to any individual's circumstances without an assessment and future provision would ensure it met the needs of the users and carers.

Details of the current provision was highlighted along with the timeframe for the proposed report's progression through the democratic process eventually being considered by the Cabinet in May, 2018.

In considering the concerns and views expressed there appeared to be three possible options to move this forward:-

1. Agree to the request of the petition.
2. Take no action of what had been requested.
3. To undertake further investigation.

Councillor Roche, therefore, formally moved Option 3 for further investigation to be undertaken and for this to be completed before formal consideration by the Cabinet.

Councillor Watson formally seconded Option 3 and agreed the concerns of service users and their families needed to be taken on board before a decision was made on any future proposal.

Resolved:- That Option 3 (to undertake further investigation) be approved in relation to the petition as submitted.

Mover:- Councillor Roche

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

152. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

153. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(1) Mr. L. Harron was unable to attend today's meeting so his question would be answered in writing.

(2) Mr. P. Thirlwall asked how did the Leader reconcile the opposing statements in the Council's Constitution, Rules of Procedure, when rule 18(17) stated that the mover of an amendment had the right of reply and rule (30) clearly stated, that the mover of an amendment does NOT have the right of reply?

The Leader believed Mr. Thirlwall had received a written a response from the Chief Executive on this matter.

Interpretation of the Constitution was not a matter for the Leader as this was a matter for the Mayor, as Chair.

The Constitution had been subject to external review by the Association of Democratic Services Officers who had assisted with the refresh and having checked with them their interpretation of Standing Orders was the same as the Council's.

Paragraph 17 was clear that there was a right of reply for a proposer of an amendment. Paragraph 30 referred to the absence of a right of reply for the proposer of an amendment in the debate on the substantive motion AFTER the debate on the amendment.

The Leader agreed the wording was not as clear as it should be and this would be rectified.

In a supplementary question Mr. Thirlwall believed the Council, on this occasion had got it wrong. The Leader, in his opinion, had also given the wrong answer, should have offered an apology and indicated the mistake would be corrected at the first opportunity instead of trying to defend the indefensible. He should also have apologised about not looking into the fifty word limit for public questions and also admitting he was wrong about paying the Leader of the Opposition an allowance He asked the Leader if he agreed with him.

The Leader explained he agreed with many matters raised by Mr. Thirlwall, but not all. On this occasion the rules were interpreted and followed with intent and this was checked and confirmed with the people who put together the wording. The Leader appreciated Mr. Thirlwall's frustration, but agreed to disagree.

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(3) Mr. D. Smith was unable to attend today's meeting so his question would be answered in writing.

(4) Mr. N. Carbutt asked could the representative outline for the benefit of the public of Rotherham, South Yorkshire Fire Authority/SYFR underspends on total revenue receipts that had been committed to reserves for years 2006-2018 e.g. underspend for 2006, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

Councillor Atkin confirmed he would need to send him a year by year breakdown in writing.

Underspends during this period have contributed to reserves of around £25 million. The growth in reserves was mainly a consequence of the retirement rate of operational staff outpacing the rate at which the Service's funding had reduced, and the fact that uncertainty about the extent and duration of future cuts have left the Fire Authority with no confidence to recruit new fire fighters (which was now a forty year commitment).

A significant proportion of these reserves were intended to be spent over the next few years on necessary capital projects - including investments in equipment, vehicles and buildings for firefighters. This would leave a much smaller amount of other earmarked and general reserves (expected to be around £5 million), to provide for other initiatives and unexpected future costs, such as insurance and operational contingency.

In a supplementary question Mr. Carbutt explained he had expected an individual breakdown of reserves, but assisted the Chamber by confirming there had been no overspend on budget since 2006. Last year there had been a £2.2 million underspend, the year before that £3.2 million and the year before that £1.6 million.

To Mr. Carbutt's knowledge and checking statement of accounts, the Service had not used its full allocated budget in previous years and moved its resources into reserves. This was in excess of what it would cost to keep Rotherham's second night time appliance. This was reason enough for this Council to review and revoke the decision and Mr. Carbutt welcomed the offer for this to go into scrutiny for further consideration.

Mr. Carbutt wanted to make a point from the FBU perspective this was not a financial decision, but a political one and the plan to move staff from Rotherham from nights to Parkway in Sheffield on days was, in fact, cost neutral. It was simply moving staff. Whilst this issue was debated Rotherham was left with one fire engine at night and Sheffield would have eight fire engines 24/7 covered during the day. This seemed ludicrous when Rotherham was the eighth fastest growing economy and had had some fantastic achievements for securing the future for steel and indeed the opening of the second furnace increasing production. Building on this infrastructure the Fire Service helped to keep those businesses safe.

Crewe, a Labour controlled council, had recently overturned a similar decision and it was within the gift of this Council to do the same. It just required the political will and on this basis Mr. Carbutt asked Councillor Atkin in what forums had he raised this issue with the Fire Authority.

Councillor Atkin confirmed he had raised the issue of the second appliance with the Fire Authority and in meetings in Rotherham. It would also be considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the 21st March, 2018.

He also pointed out that whilst Mr. Carbutt referred to there being eight appliances in Sheffield during the day there were actually five in Rotherham during the day, not one.

(5) Mr. P. Cawkwell explained that in a fire emergency it was hard to convey details in a 999 call to SYFRS. It was imperative that sufficient resources were deployed and he asked Councillor Atkin if he considered it acceptable for Rotherham Central Fire Station residents to rely on only one fire appliance at night to ensure their survival in an emergency.

Councillor Atkin explained that it was the case for the rest of South Yorkshire, and indeed the rest of the country, the Service's response to 999 incidents continued to be supported by crews from other nearby stations, depending upon the nature and the scale of the incident. During the night time period, Rotherham's situation was no different to fourteen other stations which also have a single fire engine available, and relied upon supporting appliances from elsewhere.

However, as Mr. Cawkwell may be aware, at the last meeting this Council expressed its concern about the reduction in overnight staffing levels, and subsequently asked the Chief Fire Officer to discuss the issue in Scrutiny, and this would be taken forward over the next few weeks.

In a supplementary question Mr. Cawkwell pointed out that with the Forge Island development for a hotel, restaurants etc. and the already large scale fire at Rotherham Interchange, there was a need for two pumps on the run in Rotherham at night it was that simple.

The moral case was there and held weight, the logistics were there and they held weight, the finances were and that held £27 million of weight and Mr. Cawkwell asked if this decision would be looked at again on the merits of fire safety as opposed to a political decision pushed by Councillor Atkin for reasons unknown.

Councillor Atkin assured Mr. Cawkwell that the Fire Authority looked at everything under risks and safety and the importance of keeping the people of South Yorkshire safe was too important. It was not political. Reference was made to there being only one fire appliance in Rotherham at night, which was true. Once the first pump in Rotherham was

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committed to an incident, the reserve crew on standby were deployed and the second pump could be in place within fifteen minutes.

(6) Mr. R. Beecher withdrew his question at the meeting.

(7) Mr. J. Bell was unable to attend today's meeting so his question would be answered in writing.

(8) Mrs. R. Askwith withdrew her question at the meeting.

(9) Mrs. M. Beck was unable to attend today's meeting so her question would be answered in writing.

(10) Mr. J. Dumphey asked with such an emotive decision to be made by Cabinet Members in the near future, which would affect hundreds if not thousands of Rotherham residents, would it not be reasonable to expect **ALL** voting Members to visit the service sites concerned prior to any final decision as to their futures.

Councillor Roche confirmed Members have the option to visit all Council services. He had regularly visited all of the directly provided service centres from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, and he was aware other Members have also taken the opportunity to do likewise.

Other Members and Councillor Roche had visited other Local Authorities to view best practice in areas such as North East Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and others. He himself had an annual plan to visit all centres and visited Addision last year. In addition, he received regular updates and briefings on current services for learning disability and adult social care. Members were kept fully aware of what services offered and were briefed.

In a supplementary question Mr. Dumphey explained on the reports that were being put forward so far, he had read them and believed they did not truthfully reflect the true value of centres such as Addision which was why his question was so important. He asked if the Cabinet was going to base its report on a flawed, biased and misleading report and its recommendations.

Councillor Roche explained he and the Cabinet were not going to make any decision based on a biased report.

154. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:- That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, that should the Mayor deem if necessary the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that any items involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

155. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader was happy to field any questions by Members, but would refer to any statement he would have made as part of the Item 11 on the Budget.

156. MINUTES OF THE CABINET AND COMMISSIONERS' DECISION MAKING MEETING

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet/Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting held on 15th January, 2018, be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

157. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2018-19

Further to Minute No. 111 of the meeting of the Cabinet/Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting held on 19th February, 2018, consideration was given to the report which proposed the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2018/19. It was based on the outcome of the Council's Final Local Government Financial Settlement, budget consultation and the consideration of Directorate budget proposals through the Council's formal Budget and Scrutiny process (Overview and Scrutiny Management Board) alongside a review of the financial planning assumptions within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

In setting the proposed 2018/19 Budget, Cabinet had recommended to Council an increase of 2.99% in the Council's basic Council Tax and a further 3% increase for the Adult Social Care precept; a combined increase of 5.99% for 2018/19.

The Leader of the Council addressed Members and thanked all those who had dedicated hours and hours over the last few months for these proposals to be brought forward. In particular he wanted to thank his Cabinet colleagues, and in particular Councillor Alam, for their selflessness in their approach and Councillor Steele and his Scrutiny colleagues who have been tireless in their efforts to ensure that nothing was missed.

The Leader wished to particularly speak about:-

- The issuing of a Section 114 notice to Northampton County Council, who had declared it could not make ends meet.
- The survey undertaken by the Local Government Information Unit and the MJ suggesting two-thirds of Councils intended to use their reserves to balance their budgets in the coming year.
- 95% of councils increasing Council Tax.
- This budget marked £162 million of cuts to the Council's budget, with a further £30 million expected over the following two years.

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- Across the country 800,000 fewer people now worked in Local Government since 2010.

Whilst there were undoubtedly reductions in services in this budget today this was about priorities, which was why:-

- Agency staff had been brought down by nearly a quarter over the last year.
- Councillor allowances had been cut again this year, including the cost of the Town Hall and the mayoral car, saving £48,000, resulting in £30,000 being invested into neighbourhoods.
- 60% of the savings required in this revenue budget were made without impacting on services to residents.
- This budget put Social Care first.

Social Care accounted for 60% of the budget and was the reason for the crisis in Social Care. Councillor Watson and Ian Thomas and the team were credited for the way they had transformed Rotherham's Children's Services. Their work was already turning around the lives of thousands of children and families across the Borough. This was a top priority and it had been delivered upon.

This budget continued to make significant investment in Children's Services. Care leavers have been exempted from Council Tax and the suggestion of the Looked After Children's Council in banning black bin liners had been taken on board.

At a time when there were more children in the Council's care than ever before, the pace of change in transforming Early Help Services must continue. For this reason proposals were being brought forward to reduce the amount of money spent on buildings that housed youth clubs and children's centres and instead invested in the kinds of activities that at-risk families needed the most. This would save on building costs, but would enable further work on the Family Group Conferencing and Edge of Care services.

There were no additional cash reductions this year in the Adult Social Care budget. The Government's Adult Social Care levy would be used to raise £2.9 million and meet the costs of young people who were reaching adulthood with complex needs, meet the rising costs of contracts, including the commitment to the lowest paid staff and to invest in social work practice.

The Council spent more than £11 million a year on collecting bins. In the current climate changes were required to make savings and to boost recycling. Every household was consulted on proposals to take this forward and for this reason an additional 1% was being raised in Council Tax and would be ring-fenced to facilitate the introduction of kerbside plastics collection, as thousands of residents asked for this provision.

This would mean a rise of 2.99% in Council Tax and 3% on the Government's Adult Social Care levy for Rotherham households. For the average household in Rotherham, this amounted to just over £1 extra per week.

The choice was to strengthen Rotherham's economy and build the homes that Rotherham families needed, protect £1.8 million worth of services in the coming year through higher business rate growth and income from new housing developments. By securing commercial development in the new caravan park at Rother Valley and business premises at Beighton Link the Council was expecting to protect an extra £650,000 of services from 2019/20.

Rotherham was the fastest growing economy in the region, bringing jobs and investment and the money to fund public services.

More than £800,000 was being committed to secure local school places for 125 children with special educational needs and disabilities where it was in their interest to study nearer to home.

A Living Wage uplift, paid for in this budget, would put an extra £10 a week in the pockets of the lowest paid staff.

A commitment to housing that would see an additional 167 council houses built across the Borough in the next two years.

Local Welfare Provision that would feed as many as 5,000 people next year who would otherwise literally go hungry.

The Council Tax Support Scheme benefitted the poorest residents by at least £110 a year which made them much better off than they would be in half the councils in the country.

Over the coming year, investments in the Town Centre would see work starting on the bus station in a matter of weeks.

The 2020 Road Programme would see more investment in road resurfacing this coming year than at any time in the last decade with repairs to an additional 100 roads and an additional £1 million to resurface more pavements.

Street cleansing equipment and bins to trial improvements would be invested in. Grass cutting would need to be reduced in agreement with trade union colleagues to find further savings.

There would be difficult decisions ahead, but better ways of supporting people would need to be found with closer working with partners and new ways of delivering services. Rotherham was building a future that was worth fighting for and it was time to rise to the next challenge.

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Councillor Alam was happy to second the proposals for the Budget and Council Tax for 2018/19 and considered this a responsible and holistic budget committing £216 million of public money that went beyond the services for grass cutting and collecting bins. These were services that had an impact on the lives of Rotherham residents. This was a step change for the Council where it was committed to putting residents first. This budget created jobs, looked after the most vulnerable and put the failure of the past right.

Despite the cuts and underfunding this budget was fit for purpose. These priorities would work for all Rotherham. This Council had to save £15 million this year and this budget balanced. Thanks were offered to Cabinet Members, Members of the Budget Working Group, Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the finance team who had worked tirelessly.

The national picture was grim. Austerity had failed. This Government promised to reduce the national debt, but this had actually increased. Rotherham had been made to face £177 million of cuts.

The cuts discriminated Councils in high demand deprived areas who were left with few options and difficult decisions on savings. The Council were protecting front line services and it would continue to look how it could become more efficient as a Council and carry on with the changes.

Clearly these savings gave real challenge and where there was a challenge there was always an opportunity. The Council had to be become more accessible, work in partnership and be more creative.

The Council had no choice but to increase Council Tax and to protect vulnerable citizens from the cruellest cuts. Adult Social Care had not been invested in enough over the years by Government and Councils such as Rotherham were now appealing to its own community spirit and stand as a town shoulder to shoulder with vulnerable residents.

Demographic changes needed to be taken account of as well as Adult Social Care and Children's Services and investments needed to be made in the town to safeguard the improvements and work in partnership for the future.

Councillor Cowles proposed an amendment to the budget and in doing so did not contest the budget and gave the opportunity to set and manage a sound budget effectively. Scrutiny of the revenue element had been reasonably effective, but there were still overspend issues in Children's Services and Adults Social Care, although this was a national problem. However, the management of demand could be tighter and better forecast.

The most worrying failure was the one to recognise the strong message emanating from this Government regarding the future direction to funding. It was clear cuts would continue and self-reliance was necessary. Even a change of Government and more funding would not last long. Councils needed to develop their own revenue streams. Reserves should have been used as investments rather than topping up unsound budgets and certain projects. It was time to prepare for budgets on zero funding from Government while there was still time to do so. Essential funding was then a bonus.

Councillor Cowles described a conversation he had had with Ian Thomas having read an article about the long term future for children which were predictable at the age of seven. This was shocking and the predicaments some families found themselves in were through no fault of their own. Members of UKIP had participated fully in the scrutiny of the revenue budget which had little room for manoeuvre. Councillor Cowles had made his views known and where he did not agree he had voted against.

He described how he had started to look at the capital budget following the general election in June, 2017 and how a survey in the north of England on homelessness in its widest context revealed that 74% of respondents considered the Bedroom Tax was a factor along with the shortage of suitable available accommodation.

In this context, consideration was given how to address the affordability solution and how such housing could be provided at lowest cost and utilised in the shortest time. He focused his attention to modular housing solutions and discussed with relevant Council officers who provided excellent support.

In the delivery of such solutions consideration was also given to heating and other technology deployed in other projects and solutions such as ground pumps. He had also moved on to lighting and cooking and the possibility of meeting requirements using solar panel and solar spray.

Councillor Cowles was particularly interested in these technologies and believed Rotherham had the ability to showcase locally developed technology. He had researched various batteries being developed in Manchester University and solar spray at Sheffield University.

The moving of the amendment to the budget would allow for the development of such dwellings which could aspire to eventually be self-sufficient and may not require connecting to the national grid. Market test capability would be required on a small number of units, which in turn could be used on other social housing and offered to public in energy shop in Rotherham.

The proposed dwellings would also need to be deployed on local authority land and close to the Town Centre. If demand shifted to a surrounding Ward the aim would be for them to be transportable. This was ambitious,

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but remained an option. The outcome would be for available housing for those defined as homeless that would demonstrate Rotherham was a good place to live and work as technology improved and housing developed.

From discussions with officers it was clear they were having some similar thoughts, but these tended to focus around containers which were not suitable as long term accommodation.

Councillor Cowles was, therefore, asking for the Budget and Council Tax to be accepted as proposed with the exception of an amendment to the HRA Capital Programme to ring-fence £4m of the Capital Programme specifically for a project to develop modular one and two bedroomed homes with the project meeting the following criteria:-

- That each home to be provided at a lower cost than traditional on site constructed homes.
- That the fund provides as many homes as practicable on Council-owned sites.
- That the homes have an expected asset life span of 25 years or more.
- That careful consideration is given to payback periods for the investment, aiming for the project to be revenue generating as soon as practicable
- That the project should promote and utilise micro renewable and eco technologies so each home has very low running costs for the occupier and have the potential not to be connected to the grid.
- That local innovation be utilised where possible (e.g. graphene battery technology to support solar panels and solar spray if available).
- That the homes have the ability to be picked up and moved to another site if necessary.
- That the properties be designed specifically to meet the needs of homeless people, young and or older persons to assist them make a start on the housing ladder or down size to a more affordable home.

In seconding the amendment Councillor Short described modular homes which were similar to the prefabricated homes of the past. There was a clear need in the town for affordable homes given the barriers of high deposits and low savings for young people in the town.

The demand for Council housing remained high and the amendment proposed was about people's lives and not politics. This was a start to help young people in this town if it was possible.

In speaking on the amendment Councillor Beck respected its spirit and many of the issues were important in meeting the demand of additional homes and affordable housing. He highlighted a number of projects that the Council was already involved in including the £55 million from the HRA over the next five years delivering new homes, which was the

biggest plan in decades. He described the action already taken through initiatives like the ongoing acquisition programme and the site clusters programme to build over 200 new properties on Braithwell Road in Maltby.

Rotherham was being held up as best practice and was being consulted on how it was achieving and moving forward. There was some value in discussing this proposal through Scrutiny, but not an option that could be considered and accepted today. An additional £4 million of capital expenditure needed to be considered in greater detail. The increase in Right to Buy requests had already resulted in 163 sales this year and as much as possible was being done to counteract this through the HRA reserves. He appreciated this being raised as an issue and thanked the Opposition for its submission.

Councillor Walsh believed the British house building industry needed a big push as for decades they had been using obsolete building techniques for thermal warmth and energy efficiency when there was evidence of achievable technologies. The amendment outlined a number of technologies which could be applicable in some cases, but not all.

The amendment was pointing in the right direction and would make for a good discussion paper for Scrutiny and this was something the Council should be looking into should it get the opportunity to access initiatives to build more advanced housing. However, the amendment did come late to the table so was unable to be supported for inclusion at this point.

Councillor B. Cutts was aware electricity power authorities had sought permission to locate a battery storage system in Rotherham, but he could not understand why this request had been refused.

Councillor Read thanked Councillor Cowles and Councillor Short for the amendment and their role in Scrutiny and appreciated the thought that lay behind the amendment. This was an area that Scrutiny would welcome. The Council was working on some modular builds at the moment, but was unable to accept a £4 million amendment at this stage.

Councillor Atkin pointed out the Council had been working on affordable eco-friendly houses for many years, but they still remained expensive. He was supportive of moving forward with new technology.

Councillor Cowles in his right to reply responded to Councillor Beck highlighting there had been no mention of a proposal being put forward for a specific purpose, which in this case was for homeless people below the age of thirty-five whose predicament was as a result of the Bedroom Tax and the lack of suitable accommodation.

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Councillor Cowles had simply looked to address the issue quickly and from Councillor Atkin's point of view at low cost. He had spoken to officers to look for available funds and was referred to unallocated funds within the HRA account. He was aware that the £55 million within the budget was not yet allocated.

He described Councillor Walsh's technologies being somewhat speculative and pointed out the heat pump solution was already deployed successfully in Manchester and in a number of locations solar panels were being installed with a battery capability.

The amendment was not proposing a housing solution more expensive than other housing, but simply a modular build that was low cost. It would be ridiculous to propose a solution which would be more expensive than those previously deployed.

The amendment to the budget was put to the vote and LOST.

Returning to the recommendations proposed and seconded on the original report Councillor B. Cutts referred back to the documentation received and the financial accounts where he believed he had insufficient time to read and understand the content. He described the value of real money and the could not understand how the Council could purchase goods and services without it. If the Council was short of money Councillor Cutts asked for consideration to be given to cutting the number of Councillors by a third.

Councillor Hoddinott as the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, was conscious that these cuts to Council services affected all. The pressures on social care in Adults and Children were all in the context of less money from Central Government. She did not accept the cuts were necessary, but believed they were a result of political choices. The corporation tax in the U.K. was lower than many other countries and residents were having to pick up the tab for the cuts.

It was appreciated that residents wanted to see their bins emptied and potholes fixed. More had to be done with less money and new and cheaper ways had to be developed as part of this budget.

In terms of the bins, savings had been identified and changes were required to make the Service more efficient. Consultation feedback had been considered and kerbside recycling of plastics had been secured. 80% of respondents wanted more materials collecting. Over last few years Rotherham had gone from a higher number of missed bin collections to a lower than average number of missed collections, which was a better service to residents and would continue.

On the roads the Council was having to plug the gap to repair roads and use capital locally. Members had the opportunity to feed into this and already 43 miles of road had been serviced under this programme.

Cleansing and grass cutting were areas where residents would see the changes and work from Unison was welcomed to mitigate job losses and to assist with the redesign of the service.

Residents were thanked for working with the Council and, despite the challenges, sought to make Rotherham a better place to live and work. Rotherham had 436 Love Where You Live volunteers who had collected over 8,386 bags of rubbish last year and along with other community projects and charities were working together against the cuts.

Councillor Roche entered politics to make a positive difference. He was pleased the Council was protecting the most vulnerable, but appreciated there would need to be cuts in Adult Social Care in the future. This was not something he wanted and the cuts affected him personally. The current Government was trying to decimate local councils as much as they could. He hoped that Members would support the budget recommendation.

Councillor Brookes welcomed the second recommendation of the budget which earmarked £965,000 of additional Council Tax income generated from 1% of the increase for kerbside collection of plastic. The environmental impact of plastics was now receiving the attention it deserved and she welcomed the long sighted approach to removing obstacles for members of the public to take care of the environment, alongside the increased revenue this would create.

Rother Vale, Councillor Brookes' own Ward, had recorded the highest response rates to the waste consultation and considered this an overwhelming victory for her residents and the Borough as a whole. Rotherham had been criticised in the past for not recycling plastic and this was an excellent opportunity, a step in the right direction and may go some way to addressing the anomalies for high quality plastic being purchased from overseas.

Councillor Yasseen confirmed this was the eighth year of austerity which was having a cumulative effect on people and communities. This was not fairness and equality, but cruel as this affected the average person and communities in the north of the country. Rotherham had little choice with the cuts, but the effects had been eased through cross party working through Scrutiny and the various forums to ensure how the budget was balanced.

The cuts produced inequality and services had to be prioritised. Universal services such as parks, museums and heritage sites were victims of austerity. For the future services would need to have ambition and creativity whilst maintaining and sustaining a reduced experience.

Partnership working was essential and projects like the self-sustaining Rother Valley Country Park caravan site would safeguard current jobs and create more employment.

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Sustaining fourteen libraries had been difficult and future consideration would need to be given about new models of delivery.

Investment would continue in neighbourhoods and the current devolved budget and community leadership fund would continue for sustained community benefit. The community sector would assist in delivering public services which would be further championed in the coming year.

Thanks were also offered to frontline staff who continued to shoulder the burden of workloads and should continue to receive support.

Councillor Napper was in support of the budget recommendations as he had been involved in the scrutiny of the budget line by line. He was sure the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would have welcomed other Members sitting in meetings given the large amount of documentation for consideration.

Councillor Steele outlined the political choices made by the Government and the devastating effect the cuts were having on Local Government. There may have to be some configuration of Council services in the future, but outsourcing was not always the answer. Public services required investment in order to protect the most vulnerable.

There had been in-depth scrutiny of the budget and all individual proposals checked. A few concerns remained, but these had been put in writing to the Chief Executive especially around budget reliance on increases in prices. He had asked that consideration of the budget commence earlier because decisions would be more difficult with more cuts from less money.

The consultation had been excellent, particularly around the waste proposals, but this did affect everyone and was key to any changes moving forward.

Councillor Steele pointed out that when budget proposals were put forward equality impact assessments were required. There were overspends in Children and Adults due to the nature of demand and delivery. The most vulnerable must be protected. Scrutiny would continue to monitor and challenge Strategic Directors and Cabinet Members. He was happy to accept this budget.

Councillor Carter welcomed many things in the budget and was pleased to see changes that the Liberal Democrats had fought hard for over the past year with a new library in Brinsworth, a bigger pedestrian crossing budget and the introduction of kerbside plastic recycling.

However, he had grave concerns about the budget and would be voting against. Last year he had warned the Labour Party that they were taking a massive risk when they had assumed the current low borrowing rates

would continue, but over the past year this had not been true. Even by its own forecast interest rates would triple by next year. The Labour Party had increased borrowing by almost 15% over the next three years and would blame austerity. If this were true neighbouring councils would be increasing their Council Tax by the maximum amount. Rotherham had a Town Centre that was dying and what was then described as the worse recycling scheme.

The Labour Party may talk about the success of the Advanced Manufacturing Park, but it was Vince Cable, the Liberal Democratic Business Minister, that got this off the ground. For the last eight years Labour were happy to sit comfortable on the opposition benches with no appetite to getting into power.

The Liberal Democrats wanted a better future for residents who deserved first class public services following years of neglect by Labour. There was a need to listen, build more houses to tackle the council house waiting list, making community spaces better, creating a diverse and vibrant town centre, training young people, apprenticeships and supporting businesses and the cost of living whilst in education reduced.

Rotherham had the second biggest gap in life expectancy in England which was a difference of 9.5 years between the richest and poorest. Members were too comfortable in this Chamber, were let off the hook by the opposition and were happy to be in opposition in Westminster. It seemed they were happy to say one thing and do something else. Saying they wanted to improve Adult Social Care yet were closing day centres, that they wanted to help the poorest in society, but increased fees and charges by the maximum allowed amount. Labour said it had no option, but to increase Council Tax by the maximum amount, but bought a lavish car for the Mayor and spent over £1 million on laptops and phones for Town Hall bosses. They say they wanted to tackle the social housing crisis yet overspent on the housing budget and failed to bring council homes back into use. Residents deserved first class services and should not be accepting second best which was why this budget could not be supported.

Councillor Pitchley had not seen any alternative budget put forward by Councillor Carter. He claimed the Labour Council did not care. Decisions were not taken lightly and this Council was making the best of a bad situation. With more money the Council could do more.

This budget affected all people that lived and worked in Rotherham and who had family and friends. Every Councillor was passionate about the people of Rotherham and needed to look to what could be achieved instead of fighting and supporting the budget as this was the best of a bad situation.

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Councillor Watson was in support of the budget and had spent a lot of time in its development. Everyone was affected by austerity and this budget showed what it meant. It was important not to give into austerity. Every decision was political, but every pound spent had to be done so in the right place. This budget was not just about wishes, but about hope, turning up and making a real difference. Good news like the result of the Ofsted Inspection and the Looked After Children Council campaign on bin bags had made a difference nationally.

Councillor Cusworth was heavily involved in the budget process and wanted to make a real difference not only through Improving Lives, but also through the Fostering Panel and Corporate Parenting Panel and to see on a weekly basis the decisions made in this Chamber and the investment in Children's Services.

It was hard witnessing issues within a Ward, referring someone to a food bank and observing the homeless and street sleepers. This budget made a difference to people's lives and it was for this reason Councillor Cusworth was committed to being involved.

Councillor Walsh pointed out that this Council had balanced the budget in spite of the Conservatives being in office since 2010 with the Coalition. Since then the Government had never balanced their budget and had, in fact, tripled the national debt.

Austerity did not work, but this Council was making a pretty darn good job by protecting the vulnerable and they should be commended.

The Liberal Democrats had offered little and criticised the many. This budget set out to be balanced, lawful and to accomplish best social ends within those limitations. Lots of effort had been put into this budget by Members and Officers to minimise the harm of austerity. It was not perfect, but the best that could be done under difficult circumstances.

Councillor Read, in his right to reply, confirmed the Council had tried to make the process as open and engaging as possible and the budget proposals published. He acknowledged the work of Councillor Brookes with collecting and recycling of plastics and her campaigning and consistent view throughout. He was pleased to report to Councillor Steele that work had already started on next year's proposals.

In responding to Councillor Carter's comments about debt and borrowing, the Leader explained the Council was maximising its capacity in order to protect the services people relied on and their delivery.

The Leader also commented on the building of more houses, the Mayor's car, which had been purchased when the lease agreement ended, thus saving the tax payer £9,000 a year. Difficult decisions were taken in line with the priorities, based on values and these were the best set of proposals that would make a difference to people's lives in Rotherham.

The proposals were recommended.

Resolved:- (1) That the Budget and Financial Strategy for 2018/19 as set out in the report and appendices, including the need to deliver £15.1m of budget savings and a basic Council Tax increase of 2.99% be approved.

(2) That the £965k additional Council Tax income generated from 1% of this increase is earmarked for kerbside collection of plastic waste and that the final decision on the operational model for waste services be determined by Cabinet following analysis of the public responses to the consultation and related options be approved.

(3) That the Government's proposals for an Adult Social Care precept set at the maximum of 3% on Council Tax for 2018/19 to fund additional costs in relation to Adult Social Care Services be approved.

(4) That the Statutory Resolution of Council Tax for 2018/19, included as Appendix 5, incorporating precept figures from South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the various Parish Councils within the Borough be approved.

(5) That an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is brought back to Cabinet in 2018/19 after the accounts for 2017/18 have been closed be approved.

(6) That the proposed use of reserves as set out in Section 3.5, noting that the final determination will be approved as part of reporting the outturn for 2017/18 be approved.

(7) That the changes resulting from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement have been reflected in this report in accordance with Cabinet approval on 19th February, 2018 be noted.

(8) That the comments and advice of the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer), provided in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as to the robustness of the estimates included in the Budget and the adequacy of reserves for which the Budget provides (Section 3.9) be noted and accepted.

(9) That the consultation feedback from the public, partners and trade unions following publication of Directorate budget savings proposals on the Council's website for public comment from 6th December 2017 to 4th January 2018 (Section 5) be noted.

(10) That all Council Fees and Charges are increased for 2018/19 by the September CPI increase of 3% other than Fees and Charges which are determined by national statute and that lists of all proposed fees and charges for 2018/19 are submitted to Cabinet in March for approval be approved.

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(11) That the proposed increases in Adult Social Care Provider contracts as set out in Section 3 of the report be approved.

(12) That the use of £200k of the Local Welfare Provision balance of grant funding to continue arrangements for Crisis Loan Support as set out in Section 3 of the report be approved.

(13) That the carry forward into 2018/19 of any unspent balances of funding for the Community Leadership Fund and Delegated Ward Revenue Budgets be approved.

(14) That the use of in-year Capital Receipts up to 2020/21 to maximise capitalisation opportunities arising from service reconfiguration to deliver efficiencies and improved outcomes for clients and residents, and thereby minimise the impact of costs on the revenue budget as included in the Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2018/19 (Appendix 4) be approved.

(15) That the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme as presented in Section 3.7 and Appendices 2A to 2E, to a value of £248m for the General Fund and £177m for the HRA. This requires prudential borrowing of £65m to fund non-HRA schemes over the five year period, for which provision has been made in the revenue budget for the associated financing costs be approved.

(16) That the Capital Strategy budget be managed in line with the following key principles:-

- (i) Any underspends on the existing approved Capital Programme in respect of 2017/18 be rolled forward into future years, subject to an individual review of each carry forward to be set out within the Financial Outturn 2017/18 report to Cabinet.
- (ii) In line with Financial Regulation 13.8, any successful grant applications in respect of capital projects will be added to the Council's approved Capital Programme on an ongoing basis.
- (iii) Capitalisation opportunities and capital receipts flexibilities will be maximised, with capital receipts earmarked to minimise revenue costs.
- (iv) Decisions on the financing of capital expenditure for individual capital projects are delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer.

(17) That the Treasury Management Matters for 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 3 of this report including the Prudential Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Read, Leader

Seconder:- Councillor Alam

(Councillors Alam, Albiston, Allcock, Allen, Beaumont, Beck, Brookes, Clark, Cooksey, Cowles, Cusworth, D. Cutts, J. Elliot, M. Elliott, R. Elliott, Ellis, Fenwick-Green, Hoddinott, Ireland, Jarvis, Jones, Marles, Napper, Pitchley, Price, Read, Roche, Rushforth, Sansome, Senior, Sheppard, Short, Steele, Taylor, Julie Turner, Vjestica, Walsh, Watson, Williams, Wyatt and Yasseen voted in favour of the proposals)

(Councillor Simpson abstained from the vote)

(Councillors Carter, B. Cutts and Reeder voted against the proposals)

158. APPOINTMENT OF A LOCAL RETURNING OFFICER AT COMBINED AUTHORITY MAYORAL ELECTIONS

Consideration was given to the report which detailed how the Combined Authority Mayoral election was to be held on 3rd May, 2018. The Chief Executive of the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority was the Combined Authority Returning Officer and, therefore, responsible for the overall conduct of the election, and for liaising with and co-ordinating the work of Local Returning Officers within the Combined Authority area.

The Combined Authority (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017 required the Council to appoint an officer of the Council to be the Local Returning Officer for the election of a Combined Authority Mayor. The Local Returning Officer was responsible for running the election at a local level. The Local Returning Officer would be personally responsible for the conduct of the poll, including the provision of polling stations, the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers and the verification and counting of the votes in their area.

This report, therefore, recommended that the Chief Executive be appointed as the Local Returning Officer.

Resolved:- That the Chief Executive be appointed as the Local Returning Officer for the Combined Authority Mayoral elections on 3rd May, 2018.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

159. PROTOCOL FOR THE AWARD OF THE FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

Consideration was given to the report which details how the making of an award of the Freedom of Borough was the highest honour that the Council could bestow in recognition of excellence and achievement. There was presently no guidelines or protocols governing the way in which the Council made such awards.

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This report, therefore, proposed the adoption of a protocol which would clarify the nomination process and the way in which Freedom of the Borough would be awarded in future.

Resolved:- That the protocol for the award of the Freedom of the Borough be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

160. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2018-19 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Consideration was given to the report which detailed how the Council amended the Procedure Rules in the Constitution in September, 2017 to require the Calendar of Meetings to be presented for approval at the Budget Council meeting. This report was, therefore, submitted in accordance with that requirement.

Resolved:- That the Calendar of Meetings for the 2018-19 municipal year be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

161. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES - RESPONSE OF THE CABINET

Further to Minute 109 of the meeting of the Cabinet and Commissioners held on 19th February, 2018 The Improving Lives Commission established a Task and Finish Group to consider the lessons learnt from other trust models and also looked objectively at other alternative management arrangements which might secure the long-term success of Rotherham's Children and Young People's Services. The group completed its review in the autumn of 2017 and submitted a final report to Council on 18th October, 2017.

Under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Cabinet was required to respond to any recommendations made by Scrutiny. Cabinet considered and agreed the response enclosed at Appendix A. This report was, therefore, submitted to ensure that all Members were aware of the implementation of recommendations from the review.

Resolved:- (1) That the response to the scrutiny review of Alternative Management Arrangements for Children and Young People's Services in Rotherham set out at Appendix A to this report be noted.

(2) That the response be referred to the next meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission on 13th March, 2018.

Mover:- Councillor Watson

Seconder:- Councillor Read

162. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - EMERGENCY PLANNING - RESPONSE OF THE CABINET

Further to Minute 113 of the meeting of the Cabinet and Commissioners held on 19th February, 2018 the Improving Places Select Commission established a Task and Finish Group to undertake a review of Emergency Planning in 2016. The group completed its review in the autumn of 2017 and submitted a final report to Council on 18th October, 2017.

Under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Cabinet was required to respond to any recommendations made by scrutiny and the response was agreed. This report was submitted to ensure that all Members were aware of the proposed implementation of agreed recommendations arising from the scrutiny review.

Resolved:- (1) That the response to the recommendations of the Improving Places Select Commission scrutiny review of Emergency Planning (as set out in Appendix A) be noted.

(2) That the response be referred to the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission on 14th March, 2018.

Mover:- Councillor Alam

Seconder:- Councillor Read

163. NOTICE OF MOTION

There were no notices of motions submitted for consideration.

164. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendation and minutes of the meetings of the Standards and Ethics Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Allen

Seconder:- Councillor Ireland

165. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendation and minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Wyatt

Seconder:- Councillor Walsh

166. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendation and minutes of the meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Roche

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

167. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover:- Councillor Atkin

Seconder:- Councillor Walsh

168. LICENSING

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Board Sub-Committee and Licensing Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Ellis

Seconder:- Councillor Beaumont

169. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

(1) **Councillor Short** asked would the Police and Crime Panel representative on the Council give a lay man's outline of what the Police and Crime Commissioner's Council Tax Precept meant to his Ward residents?

Councillor Sansome confirmed that for the new financial year 2018/19 the Government had frozen its grant funding and so the Police and Crime Commissioner would need to increase the precept in South Yorkshire in order to cover the costs of the police officers' pay award, increase costs for transitioning to more visible neighbourhood policing across the county and the ongoing costs associated with legacy issues, such as child sexual exploitation in Rotherham (investigation and civil claims) and the Hillsborough disaster (civil claims).

Residents who took part in the consultation made it clear to the Police and Crime Commissioner they would be prepared to pay more to see more police on the streets. The last Chief Constable, David Crompton, oversaw the reduction of 500 police officers and office staff and also removed any semblance of neighbourhood policing.

The Panel's position, a meeting which Councillor Sansome chaired, stated very clearly that if any proposed reduction in officers or backroom staff was forthcoming then it would veto the budget. The new neighbourhood model that Members would have chance to view and challenge in April would see more joined up working with partners with a commitment with the Chief Constable to gradually increase officer numbers and provide better flexible working.

The Police and Crime Commissioner was committed to reducing his substantial reserves of over £20 million by up to £7.3 million. This reduction in reserves was key as it would allow the increase in the precept to be centred on policing and making residents feel safe. For the first time as a Police and Crime Panel a small cross party group would scrutinise

the budget on a six monthly basis and would report back as and when required.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's budget would reduce and the Police budget would increase by £3 million. Local partnership grants would be negotiated as previous years with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

For this financial year the maximum increase under Government rules was the equivalent to £12 per annum (23p per week) on a property in Council Tax Band D. Most properties in South Yorkshire were either Band A or Band B whose increases would be £9.33 and £8.00 annually respectively, which worked out as an increase at 18p (£9.33) and 15p (£8.00).

Councillor Short thanked Councillor Sansome for his answer and for the reassurance that money was being taken from the budget and reserves to put more police officers on the beat and he would advise his constituents accordingly. By contrast, however, the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services were sitting on £27.4 million and would not reinstate the second fire appliance in Rotherham.

(2) Councillor R. Elliott referred to the last full Council where it was stated that Rotherham's second appliance would be reinstated when finances were available. Latest SYFR budget predicted a £2.2 million underspend 2018/19 with £25 million reserve plus a four year funding agreement with the Government. He asked if the finance was there when would the second appliance be reinstated?

Councillor Atkin confirmed South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue had suffered severe cuts to its budget, having lost around £12.5 million in Government funding since 2010 – a 29% reduction. The medium term financial plan actually predicted a small deficit of up to £0.5 million by 2019/20.

The Service was now in a relatively stable financial position, although there remained considerable uncertainty about finances beyond 2020 and there were still on-going risks to the current budget.

However, in light of the concerns that Members expressed in the last meeting, the Chief Fire Officer had been asked to discuss the issue with Scrutiny Members and it was hoped that the discussion would help to move this issue forward.

In a supplementary question Councillor R. Elliott asked why were the Council waiting for the Scrutiny meeting when this issue was urgent. Why was this Chamber's motion concerns not brought up and discussed at last week's Fire Authority meeting.

Councillor Atkin explained the decision about the second appliance in Rotherham was made back in 2013 and in the last four years this had never been an issue. Only recently had the issue been brought up. Reference was made to the four year plan that the Government offered the Fire Authority for efficiency savings resulted in changes to the way that the Fire Service crewed certain appliances. A four year plan would not have been granted had the working methods not changed.

(3) Councillor R. Elliott referred to a large fire in Dalton recently where six appliances attended including one each from Rotherham, Maltby and Dearne whilst there was one parked up in Eastwood Station. This situation left Maltby and Dearne areas seriously short of cover and he asked did Councillor Atkin think this was acceptable?

Councillor Atkin could understand the concerns raised. However, it was normal for larger scale incidents to be dealt with by fire engines from a number of fire stations, depending upon the nature and the scale of the incident. On these occasions, the Service's response to other 999 incidents was provided by other, nearby stations. This situation was exactly the same for any other fire and rescue service in the country.

In a supplementary question Councillor R. Elliott pointed out a DRM vehicle was stationed at Eastwood which was used for incidents of suspicious packages etc. It took two members of staff to operate this vehicle and was on call 24 hours a day. Therefore, if it was called out on nights Rotherham would be left with no cover. He asked did Councillor Atkin think this was acceptable given that there was also no beeper service for Rotherham Fire Station like there was for Maltby and Dearne.

Councillor Atkin explained on nights in Rotherham one pump was permanently available. The second one was available after a short delay. This practice was no different to many other stations in South Yorkshire and across the country. Six pumps attended in Dalton, which would have come from other areas where resources were deployed to particular incidents and common practice.

(4) Councillor R. Elliott explained in the next financial year SYFR were going to invest £20 million of its reserves into "secure investments" and he asked would Councillor Atkin advise where the interest on this investment went.

Councillor Atkin explained the statement was in reference to the Service's intention to spend a significant proportion of its reserves over the next few years on necessary capital projects, including investments in equipment, vehicles and buildings for firefighters. This would leave a much smaller amount of other earmarked and general reserves (expected to be around £5 million), to provide for other initiatives and unexpected future costs, such as insurance and operational contingency. It was not the case that the money was being invested in some sort of commercial activity as it would appear to be suggested.

In a supplementary question Councillor R. Elliott would re-read the statement as he must have read it wrong as he thought Councillor Atkin was going to report that the interest was going to be paid for the increase in allowances that was going to be paid to Fire Authority Members. This was agreed at the last meeting of that Authority and he asked was Councillor Atkin able to say that he would not be accepting this increase in order to show solidarity with the fire fighters and the people of Rotherham who wanted to see this second appliance reinstated.

Councillor Atkin believed Councillor Elliott must have misunderstood the position as there had been no vote on the increase of allowances.

He explained that allowances were reviewed every four years by an independent consultant. This was due in the next few months. However, previously a recommended larger increase had been suggested, but this had been refused and Fire Authority Members agreed to only take the same percentage increase as the fire fighters.

(5) Councillor Napper asked would the Council now agree with Opposition Councillors that Rotherham's second appliance should be reinstated after the fires in Dalton and Maltby in which a man lost his life.

Councillor Atkin, along with other Members, would all wish to pay respects to those affected by the recent fires in Dalton and Maltby, where sadly a gentleman in his fifties died.

The Fire Authority took most seriously its responsibility to manage risk right across South Yorkshire, especially at a time when budgets were squeezed. Thankfully deaths in fires were now much rarer than they once were. Both of the fires mentioned required several appliances to be deployed, in accordance with the Fire Service's plans, and the Maltby fire was attended by appliances from Maltby fire station as well as Aston Park and Edlington.

Whilst everyone would all wish to see the second Rotherham appliance staffed overnight, as indicated last month, the Fire Authority as a whole had to weigh that against other risks and demands on the Service.

In a supplementary question Councillor Napper indicated that if the fire in Dalton occurred just before the fire in Maltby, Maltby would not have been covered and he asked where would the fire appliance come from in such a scenario.

Councillor Atkin explained there were approximately twenty-five fire stations in South Yorkshire. Fire appliances moved across the county whenever there was a fire and deployed accordingly, which was common practice across the country.

(6) Councillor Cowles asked could he be informed of the number of homes in the Borough that have been visited by the Fire Community Safety Team and confirmed he would accept a simple percentage figure.

Councillor Atkin confirmed the Fire Service had carried out Home Safety Checks in more than 46,000 homes in Rotherham which was 34% of all domestic properties.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles pointed out that if only 34% of homes had been checked this left 66% that have not been inspected. This meant agreement was being given to cut the Fire Service, but meant the Service had little idea about the state of housing and how fire proof it was. He asked would it not be easier to accept that the decision made was wrong, accept that there should be a review of the plan on regular basis and why not do what Crewe have done where the Labour and Conservative parties had joined together to support each other and to support the fire fighters in order to reinstate this second appliance.

Councillor Atkin confirmed 66% of properties had not been inspected, but this was done on a priority basis and those deemed most at risk. Most people would assess their own risk and buy smoke alarms. It would appear that if a house did catch fire the Service had failed so you believed it made more sense to use resources to inspect properties than on fire fighters to prevent a fire in the first place.

170. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN

(1) Councillor Sansome asked could the Cabinet Member confirm were there homeless people in Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and how many.

Councillor Beck confirmed the Authority sympathised with those who found themselves in that position. Given the deterioration in the weather, officers had been out each day supporting those people who were rough sleeping, the number of which fluctuated.

The Council co-ordinated a Rough Sleeper count in Rotherham and in November, 2017 two people were identified and supported.

In terms of statutory homeless between April, 2017 to the end of January, 2018 there were 92 households identified and during this period 451 households were prevented from becoming homeless. These were on the housing register waiting for accommodation and given priority for properties.

Homeless households were supported in finding suitable private rented accommodation, but there were also 484 households who were homeless on the Housing Register waiting for accommodation for a variety of reasons.

The Council was also proactively involved in various projects having attracted over £800,000 in funding to assist services in tackling this challenge and to abolish this problem. Rotherham was not alone as this was also a national issue.

In a supplementary question Councillor Sansome asked the Cabinet Member to consider the position of those people who were encouraged to come off streets for shelter, which was not possible if they had pets and for this to be overcome to encourage those in need to come into shelter whilst taking care of their pets at the same time.

Councillor Beck was in agreement, but was not familiar with any particular cases. He asked Councillor Sansome to share any information he may have to see if this could be taken forward.

The Mayor also pointed out she was working on these type of initiatives with Shiloh and Thornberry Animal Sanctuary.

(2) Councillor Carter asked could the Cabinet Member reassure him that all services tendered by the Council to external organisations paid the Rowntree Living Wage, as directly employed Council workers received?

Councillor Alam explained that as Councillor Carter was aware, the Council could not legally oblige all the providers of commissioned services to pay the Rowntree Living Wage.

However, the Council did encourage contracted services to pay the Living Wage. The Council had a minimum standards Charter which was built into tender processes. There were a range of criteria within the Charter and a question within the tender asked organisations whether they were willing to promote and support the Charter and work towards the principles it set out.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter pointed out the Cabinet Member mentioned the Living Wage in the Charter, but in the budget extra funds was being allocated for changes to the National Living Wage and asked if it was the National Living Wage in the Charter or the Rowntree Living Wage.

Councillor Alam confirmed it was the National Living Wage standards within the Charter.

(3) Councillor Simpson asked when would his idea of full photo ID be in Rotherham Taxis, along with promises of other more visible Taxi ID being implemented?

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Councillor Hoddinott assured Members that the current policy required all taxi drivers to have a taxi badge, which was displayed at all times whilst working, including a photograph of the licensed driver, together with their name and license number.

In a supplementary question Councillor Simpson pointed out that in the last two years he had only seen photographic I.D. evidence once when it accidentally dropped out.

Councillor Hoddinott urged Members that any breaches of the Policy should be reported immediately to the Licensing Section either by telephone or by email.

(4) **Councillor Sansome** pointed out that after 2020 the European Medicines Agency would move from London to Amsterdam with the loss of 900 jobs, a budget of 322 million euros and asked what would be the impact for the residents of the Borough in accessing new drugs, vaccines etc.

Councillor Roche explained that it was with regret that the European Medicines Agency (EMA) was planning to move from London to Amsterdam by the end of March, 2019.

It was too early to say if there would be any impact on people in the UK or the Borough, but he gave his assurance that the Health and Wellbeing Board (which included members from the CCG, NHS England and Healthwatch) would work to identify any negative impacts and escalate any concerns to the appropriate authorities.

It was also pointed out that Public Health England have not yet undertaken a quick review of literature so we are unable to comment on the likely impact of this move at this time.

In a supplementary question Councillor Sansome believed all Members of the Chamber would appreciate being well informed about this issue through full Council, Health and Wellbeing Board, Scrutiny or a seminar of the measures that would be required and in order to inform residents of what was forthcoming.

Councillor Roche gave a guarantee that as further information came to light he would make sure Members were kept fully informed of any impacts and take any action as required.

(5) **Councillor B. Cutts** referred to his question No. 2 on the 24th January. He was regularly asked of the progress and expected date of completion of the bus shelter on Wickersley Road/Middle Lane and asked if he could be advised when.

As the Cabinet Member had given her apologies for this meeting, a response would be provided in writing.

(6) **Councillor Carter** asked how many properties have been lost to the Council housing stock under Right to Buy legislation over the past five years, and how did the Council plan to replace this lost Council housing stock?

Councillor Beck explained Right to Buy sales nationally had declined to their lowest level for many years and by the end of the last Labour Government to record all-time lows. However, numbers had increased each year since 2012 when the Coalition Government increased substantially the maximum discount to buyers.

So far this year 63 Right to Buy sales had been submitted and last year there were 152. Over the last five year period 716 Council homes have been lost through the Right to Buy Scheme.

To counteract this the Council was committing more than £50 million to the Council housing growth in the latest Housing Revenue Account business plan and the major programme currently underway would deliver 167 new homes for Council rent through the Site Clusters programme with Wates and the Homes England grant funded programme.

The Council also had plans to deliver more homes in the Town Centre, would commence a pilot to deliver homes for older people and young people and was working together to deliver specialist bungalows in various parts of the Borough for families who had particular needs for adaptations.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked if the Council was also building private homes for first time buyers as a revenue generating project.

Councillor Beck confirmed that there were shared ownership products within the housing development being built along with proposals for rent to buy initiatives. This would mean any surplus generated from privately occupied homes could be reinvested back into the Housing Revenue Account to deliver even more Council housing.

(7) **Councillor B. Cutts** asked what was the financial result in last year for Magna Trust compared to the previous two years?

Councillor Alam confirmed for the last three financial years the surplus, excluding depreciation, for Magna had been:-

2015	£329,940
2016	£97,120
2017	£22,348

(8) Councillor Carter had asked about Aggregate Industries Asphalt at December's Council meeting and asked the Cabinet Member if she could provide an update on how this investigation was progressing?

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed the Council was investigating a number of complaints in relation to bitumen type odours alleged by residents to be originating from Aggregate Industries in Sheffield. It should be made clear that the Council had no evidence to demonstrate that the odours were indeed from this company.

Officers have maintained regular contact with the residents who have complained about the odour and continued to work with them. A meeting was held on the 24th January, 2018 to find out where the odour was coming from. Technical information was available and it was suggested that Councillor Carter sit down with Officers and go through this information in more detail as to how this investigation was progressing.

(9) Councillor Simpson for the second time asked could the Council defend against the privatisation of the NHS.

Councillor Roche explained the Labour Party created the National Health Service – its proudest achievement, providing universal healthcare for all on the basis of need, free at the point of use. In the aftermath of war and national bankruptcy, it was a Labour Government that found the resources to create a National Health Service. It would appear it was the intention of the Tory Government to run this down.

The current national Labour policy was that it would invest in the NHS, to give patients the modern, well-resourced services they needed for the 21st century.

The next Labour Government would reverse privatisation of the NHS and return the health service into expert public control. Labour would repeal the Health and Social Care Act that puts profits before patients and make the NHS the preferred provider. It would reinstate the powers of the Secretary of State for Health to have overall responsibility for the NHS.

Whilst the Council obviously did not control either the law or the decisions made by the NHS locally, it was clear there was one solution that participants could take part in – elect a Labour Government.

However, as Councillor Simpson had asked about local response it was worth adding that the Council did not have a say in the letting and tendering of any contracts by the NHS. It could only put a point of view to the Rotherham Hospital Trust and CCG as it was not the decision maker.

Personally NHS privatisation was one reason why everyone should have grave concerns about the proposed trade deal with the USA which would mean it would be illegal to stop any American company bidding for any contract including those in the NHS and including all those in Rotherham.

It could well include GP surgeries which were already privatised individual businesses.

In a supplementary question Councillor Simpson referred to the Labour Party in 2004 allowing a foot in the door for surgeries with people like Virgin Care that was a real problem at the moment. If this was a matter worth fighting for then the Council should fight for it.

The Mayor did not feel there was a need for a response.

(10) Councillor Carter asked how much money raised from Section 106 contributions in the past 12 months has been returned to developers by not being spent within the allocated time period.

As the Cabinet Member had given her apologies for this meeting, a response would be provided in writing.

(11) Councillor Napper referred to Fortem who was a company contracted by R.M.B.C. This company made a profit of £2.3 million and was now to make 20+ staff redundant in Rotherham. Councillor Napper asked what was the Council's position with regards to Fortem in the future when they could afford to keep these people on.

Councillor Beck explained Fortem have confirmed that the current number of staff affected by the proposal was 16, but due to the part-time nature of many of the roles, this equated to 13.5 full time equivalent (FTE) roles.

Fortem had offered their assurance in regular dialogue with the Council that they were complying with all legal obligations and engaging with the Trade Unions with meaningful consultation.

The picture was more positive with the changes at Fortem and how they were to be restructured. They were looking to create a new Northern Training Academy in Dinnington at the Rother Valley Campus in partnership with Rother Valley College which would create/employ 13 new positions. Furthermore, Fortem were looking to strengthen their Northern Support Hub and create more employment of which the potential risk of redundancy may be minimized. The actual redundancies would be much lower than those at risk.

(12) Councillor Carter asked what measures were the Council taking to be prepared against cyber security attacks.

Councillor Alam explained the Council took the threat of cyber-attack very seriously and had put in place a "defence in-depth" methodology in attempts to defend against cyber threats. This meant numerous layers of security had been created that, if breached at one level, offered additional or different layers of protection at lower levels.

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In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked how did the Council benchmark in terms of cyber security measures, had there ever been any assessment on performance and had anything been learnt if we were consulting.

Councillor Alam reported on the exercises which involved designated persons attempting to breach the system. Regular updates were also provided to ensure the cyber protection was active.

(13) Councillor M. Elliott referred to his question on the 25th January, 2017 where he asked if the Council were ever likely to consider recycling of plastics. He received a rather negative response and he, therefore, asked if it had taken a revelation that Rotherham would soon be the only Authority in the country not collecting plastics, to embarrass the Council to now consider it.

Councillor Hoddinott did not accept the premise of the question and confirmed she was not embarrassed by the comment. She had spoken to local residents and had taken on board the consultation where a number would prefer for plastic to be collected from the kerbside. Passing the budget today allowed the Council to find the resource and the funding in order for this action to be taken.

Councillor Elliott welcomed the news that funds had been earmarked for the collection of kerbside plastic. He suspected the collection of plastics featured highly in the bin tax consultation and understood a consultancy firm was involved. The fact that plastics was not even considered begged the question about value for money.

Councillor Hoddinott pointed out plastic was considered and throughout the consultation the Service had been clear about the extra cost of recycling plastic which was around £700k. The Service did not have the funds earmarked to bring that in at the time. Through the consultation the Cabinet Member would love to have been able to include the recycling of plastic, but the funding at that time was not available.

Councillor Hoddinott did wish to comment on the reference to the bin tax and pointed out that unfortunately irresponsible phrases like bin tax have led the public to misunderstand that this was a tax on their Council Tax bill for green waste. It was emphasised this was not the case and was an opt in system not a tax.

(14) Councillor Sansome asked would the Cabinet consider holding a seminar to update Members on the current position with “STP” or whichever acronym it went by. He was aware some Members may struggle to explain its technicality when challenged by residents.

Councillor Roche was happy to hold a seminar as there were a few misunderstandings about the STP.

The STP was now referred to as the Integrated Care System (ICS) following recent NHS guidance issued on 2nd February, 2018 and many Members were concerned about the possible implications of Government cuts and policy towards the Health Service.

The Council, Rotherham Foundation Trust, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group and Voluntary Action Rotherham have come together to form the Rotherham Integrated Care Partnership because it was important that everyone worked together to deliver the best services locally and brought in extra money and much needed resources.

The work of this group was governed by the Rotherham Integrated Health and Social Care Plan with activity ultimately overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board which meant it could be scrutinized and challenged by Members. At Borough level partners were focused on working together to deliver improved health and social care outcomes at a place level. The improvement of the patient journey was a fundamental part of the integration activity.

(15) Councillor Carter asked how much money raised from Section 106 contributions needs to be spent in the next 12 months before being returned to developers.

As the Cabinet Member had given her apologies for this meeting, a response would be provided in writing.

(16) Councillor Carter asked would the Council commit to fund free sanitary product schemes in schools in an effort to alleviate period poverty.

Councillor Watson explained all schools have a delegated budget which included an amount allocated to address health, safety and welfare issues. As part of this arrangement, secondary schools would routinely hold a stock of female sanitary products in first aid/medical rooms for the use of pupils where needed.

(17) Councillor Carter asked was the Council currently running a deficit to the Local Government Pension Scheme, and if so how did the Council plan to address this?

Councillor Alam explained the latest position was the Council was up to date with its liabilities. Any further information could be obtained from the Council's representative on the Pensions Authority, Councillor Ellis.

(18) Councillor B. Cutts asked could he be given an explanation of the past system, password, and costs incurred on RMBC by taxi companies in trafficking C.S.E. victims around the country.

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Councillor Read had been advised the Council had no record of operating such a system. He was conscious this was a rumour that cropped up from time to time and urged anyone, who had information to suggest a system was in place or that officers were involved in some kind of criminal activity, to contact the National Crime Agency and report this information as this would need to be investigated properly.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cutts explained that as part of his leisure time he had read through Ministry documents and as a consequence passed on to the Council his findings where in these documents it referred to taxis and their activities. In addition, he had read two books that had been equally analysed by him and listed. He found it difficult to accept the Leader's comments, but he would continue to pursue his concerns.

The Mayor indicated a response was not required.

(19) Councillor Sansome referred to the recent re-starting of "N" Furnace which was good news for all, and asked could the Cabinet Member reassure Members she will be working with Liberty to protect the current jobs and any further recruitment.

As the Cabinet Member had given her apologies for this meeting, a response would be provided in writing.

(20) Councillor Carter asked could the Cabinet Member please provide a status update on the diversity of the Council's workforce, progress of this over the past 10 years, and how this compared with local demographic data.

Councillor Alam explained that over the last 10 years the Council had made progress on the diversity of the Council's workforce, in some areas significant progress and in other areas there had been a steady increase, including:-

- The top 5% of earners who were women has increased from 48.02% to 66.43% since 2008 so a significant increase.
- The top 5% of earners who were members of the BME community had increased from 1.79% to 3.27% since 2008 and the overall workforce figures for BME were currently 4.05%.
- The percentage of employees with a disability was currently 8.53% compared to and in 2008 this was 3.53%. Whilst this was still significantly below the local demographic figure (16.2% 2011 census) the Council was moving in the right direction.

Councillor Alam confirmed he would provide a table with a detailed breakdown after the meeting.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked if there was an average earnings within the figures above.

Councillor Alam confirmed that the Council did not currently capture this data.

(21) Councillor Carter asked with the increased road crossing budget, could the Council guarantee a badly needed puffin crossing on Bawtry Road would be installed in the next financial year?

Councillor Hoddinott expressed her disbelief that Councillor Carter had voted against the budget that increased the road crossing budget that residents had been raising as a concern.

Action on these important issues was taken forward by the current administration to mitigate road crossing budgets being cut by Central Government.

Consultation had been undertaken on Bawtry Road about a number of measures that could alleviate road safety.

The road crossing budget was allocated on a needs-led basis and there were already 2 schemes for this year that were a higher priority.

(22) Councillor Napper referred to a Rotherham resident, who was taken to court by R.M.B.C. for breaking planning law and ordered to take the building down. The resident was now being supported by R.M.B.C. to have the decision reversed with the help of the R.M.B.C. Legal Department and he asked why.

As the Cabinet Member had given her apologies for this meeting, a response would be provided in writing.

(23) Councillor Cowles asked as the Council have been informed that the store holders of the bazaar market have been given a rent reduction due to the poor trading conditions currently experienced, could the Cabinet Member confirm or otherwise if this true and, what was the percentage reduction?

As the Cabinet Member had given her apologies for this meeting, a response would be provided in writing.

171. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.