

**COUNCIL MEETING
3rd March, 2021**

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor Jenny Andrews) (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Albiston, Allen, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Bird, Brookes, Buckley, Carter, Clark, Cooksey, Cowles, Cusworth, B. Cutts, D. Cutts, Elliot, M. Elliott, R. Elliott, Ellis, Fenwick-Green, Hague, Hoddinott, Jarvis, Jepson, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Mallinder, Marles, Marriott, Napper, Pitchley, Read, Reeder, Roche, Rushforth, Russell, Sansome, Senior, Sheppard, Short, Simpson, Steele, Taylor, John Turner, Julie Turner, Tweed, Vjestica, Walsh, Watson, Whysall, Williams, Wyatt and Yasseen.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

446. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor referred to with sadness the recent death of former Councillor Paul Hill. The Mayor led a minute's silence in his honour.

The Mayor referred to the following Mayoral engagements:

- Making in a video to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January that had been shared on the Council's social media channels.
- Taking part in an informal video chat with the Mayor of Zabrze, Poland, a town that the Council had formed a co-operation agreement with, in order to share experiences of how the pandemic had impacted both communities.

The Mayor noted some upcoming events including:

- Sending flowers and good wishes to a couple in the Borough who would be celebrating their Diamond wedding anniversary.
- The launch on 14th April of the of the "Beat the Street" initiative, a game that had been developed by a team of doctors and physical health experts, to encourage fun, physical activity across the Borough.

The Mayor also noted her congratulations to Stephen Boulton from Swinton who had been awarded the British Empire Medal in the New Year's honours list for his services to karate and the community.

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The Mayor concluded by advising that an extraordinary Council meeting had been scheduled for Friday, 19th March, to formally bestow onto Dame Julie Kenny the honour of the Freedom of the Borough and welcomed all Members and members of the public to join her online for this very special occasion.

447. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ireland.

448. COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor advised that since the publication of the agenda notification had been received that Councillor Ian Jones had changed political affiliation from 'Independent' to 'Rotherham Democratic Party'.

As a result of the changes the political makeup of the Council was noted to be as follows

Councillors	Committee Seats Pre-Adjustment	Committee Seats Post-Adjustment
Labour 42 Councillors	104	104
Rotherham Democratic Party 12 Councillors (+1)	27	30
Non-aligned 6 Councillors (-1)	18	15
TOTAL	149	149

It was noted that by virtue of representing the Rotherham Democratic Party on the Improving Places Select Commission, Licensing Board and Licensing Committee there were no further seat reallocations that were required to be made.

449. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved: - That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 13th January, 2021, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Watson

450. PETITIONS

The Mayor introduced the report and confirmed the receipt of 3 petitions received since the last Council meeting which had not met the threshold for consideration by Council.

- Containing 97 signatures calling on the Council to prevent vehicles going the wrong way down a one-way system and to enforce the Access Only Guidance.
- Containing 21 signatures calling on the Council to request that the National Crime Agency open a line of investigation into those individuals, organisations, partners, agencies or others identified during the investigation and to determine if charges should be brought against them, without further delay. Councillor Allen Cowles the lead petitioner addressed Council as part of the presentation of the petition.
- Containing 38 signatures requesting that the Council install residential parking only on Mortain Road and Lymister Avenue with time limits of 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Monday to Friday.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the report be received.
- 2) That the relevant Strategic Directors be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as detailed in the report, by 17th March, 2021.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Watson

451. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jepson declared a Personal Interest in agenda item No. 22 (Recommendation from the Standards and Ethics Committee - Outcome of a Standards and Ethics Sub-Committee Hearing regarding the alleged breach of the Code of Conduct - Councillor Ireland).

Councillors Cowles, Ellis and M. Elliott declared a Personal Interest in agenda item No. 23 (Recommendation from the Standards and Ethics Committee - Outcome of a Standards and Ethics Sub-Committee Hearing regarding the alleged breach of the Code of Conduct - Councillor Ellis).

452. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(1) Mr. Thirlwall asked the Leader to tell him whether the Council had an anti-nepotism policy. The Leader confirmed that there was no specific anti-nepotism policy but allegations of nepotism would be dealt with under the Officer Code of Conduct for members of staff with conflicts of interest with regards to recruitment. For Elected Members, matters regarding the Nolan Principles would fall under the Member Code of Conduct.

In his supplementary question, Mr. Thirlwall explained the definition of nepotism. He stated that the Leader had appointed his spouse, Councillor Hoddinott, to the role of Cabinet Member with an allowance of £13,000 per year. He asked whether the Leader thought he was guilty of nepotism

and if the relationship should be declared on both Councillor's Register of Interest. Mr. Thirlwall went on to state that Councillor Hoddinott had been deemed unfit to be a Cabinet Member by Louise Casey in 2015 and as such the Leader should explain why Councillor Hoddinott was the best person for this job.

In response the Leader confirmed that Cabinet Members were appointed on merit and that he was lucky to be able to choose from a selection of high quality Councillors with national experience. He gave the example of Councillor Alam who had previously worked with the Equalities and Human Rights Commission; Councillor Roche who was a former advisor to the DFE and Councillor Hoddinott who was a current national local government officer for a national political party. The Leader explained that it would be an error on his part not to use the best talent available to him to serve the Borough. The Leader also explained that at the Centre for Public Scrutiny Conference 2 or 3 years ago, Louise Casey spoke about Rotherham Council and said that there were good people at Rotherham Council, specifically mentioning Councillor Hoddinott who had been scapegoated for the failings of those that gone before her. The Leader pointed out that those that had gone before Councillor Hoddinott included people like Mr. Thirlwall. The Leader also explained that Louise Casey had described his leadership as outstanding on more than one occasion and that they had made extraordinary progress on improving the Council. The Leader stated that Councillor Hoddinott had done an excellent job for the people of Rotherham by delivering major roads improvements and transport improvements. It was confirmed that the Council had been in intervention long before Councillor Hoddinott's appointment due to the politicisation of road improvement decisions. Councillor Hoddinott had also led a huge change in household bin collections and introduced the maternity/paternity policy. The Leader explained that the Borough was a better place for women because of the work Councillor Hoddinott had done with sex establishments. The Leader was proud of Councillor Hoddinott's achievements as Cabinet Member and confirmed that she had not accepted any of her Special Responsibility Allowance for her work as a Cabinet Member and as such there had been no financial benefit to his household.

(2) Mr. Felstead asked a question on the PFI type funding agreement for Forge Island. He asked the Leader to demonstrate the best value to the tax payer. Mr. Felstead explained that, as he understood it, Muse Developments were putting £30 million into construction of the buildings and that the Council would then rent the buildings back from Muse for 35 years for an unknown amount of rental and that after the 35 years, the Council would have the option to buy back the buildings. Mr. Felstead believed that would cost over £200 million based on the last 35 years property prices and did not make sense and, therefore, was another example of mismanagement of money. Mr. Felstead asked why this PFI type of scheme was better value for money than the Council just investing the £30 million itself.

In response the Leader explained that this was not a PFI arrangement but a contractual arrangement with Muse where the Council would take on a head-lease for facilities that they were going to be built. The Leader also explained that the reason it is good value for money was that the Council is not a cinema developer and does not have the skills or experience to bring in a cinema developer. The Leader explained that if the Council had gone down the route of developing the project itself rather than appointing Muse, he expected Mr. Felstead would have objected to that as a waste of money. Muse were selected as the development partner through a competitive tender process which demonstrated best value. It was expected that rather than costing the Council money, the development would generate a small profit for the Council. The head-lease was not yet fixed and would not be fixed until all commercial partners were in place.

In his supplementary question, Mr. Felstead explained the Council would still get the same amount of profit if they went directly to a builder rather than through Muse Developments. He believed that if the Forge Island Scheme was a success, the Council could end up paying hundreds of millions of pounds when it could have just paid £30 million up front. Mr. Felstead was concerned about the business plan that relied on parking fees. He explained that residents would use other facilities such as Meadowhall where they did not have to pay for parking. Mr. Felstead also stated that the Cinema industry was a risky industry to invest in and may not be around in 35 years. He also explained that Muse was a London based developer which took money out of the local economy. Mr. Felstead highlighted the fact that the Council were advertising the Head of Change post at £550 a day which he believed was to help the Council get out of bad financial decisions. Mr. Felstead's supplementary question was when would the Council conduct a full financial consultation on the scheme?

The Leader did not accept much of what Mr. Felstead had stated and explained that the risk of the development was shared and that the Council's risk did not begin until Muse had contracts in place for the development. There are limits of the amount of commercially sensitive data that can be put in the public domain but the cinema had been widely consulted on and was a very popular choice when the Leader consulted on it around 6 years ago. All of the documents relating to the decision making on the project had been published in the correct way which allowed people to comment before the decisions were taken. The Council wanted this to be a success and the Council had acted in a usual and standard way in bringing forward this development.

453. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

454. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

In welcoming everyone to the final meeting of the Municipal Year, the Leader noted that no one would ever want to experience another year like the last one.

The Leader advised that he was hopeful, however, that there was a glimmer of light on the horizon with Covid case numbers dropping nationally and locally. The Leader advised that as of 1st March there were 56 patients in hospital in Rotherham with Covid and that also there were currently no Care Home resident positive cases being reported. The Leader advised that there had been a good reduction in positive cases being reported for those aged over 60 and amongst school age children, however, there was still a way to go with working age people, with cases numbers remaining higher than would be liked.

The Leader thanked the Clinical Commissioning Group and local volunteers for the remarkable progress that they continued to make in delivering vaccinations. The Leader advised that the target to vaccinate 56,000 people during the initial 8 week period had been exceeded, with over 60,000 residents being vaccinated, with over 90% of residents in the top four priority groups having been vaccinated. The Leader noted that over 75,000 vaccinations had now been delivered with second dose vaccinations scheduled to start on 9th March.

The Leader advised that over 1,500 businesses had now been supported by the Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes, having received support totalling £17.8million. In addition, the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority had also supported over 1,300 businesses with the Additional Restrictions Grant.

The Leader noted with sorrow the loss of 776 residents during the pandemic and stated that whilst the vaccination would offer a level of protection against the Covid-19 virus, it did not mean that the risk had gone away.

The Leader advised, however, that the situation would improve and that everyone could help by following the national restrictions, staying at home and getting tested if needed.

The Leader thanked all Members for giving their time to serve the community over the last 5 extraordinary years. The Leader reflected on the enormous progress that had been made over the previous 5 years, most notably with regard to Children's Services, and in bringing the intervention to a close, but also in the taking of difficult decisions around Social Care in the right way, in the trebling the number of Council homes built each year and the steps being taken to revitalise the town centre. The Leader noted that while Members may have had at times disagreed, that this had been done so with good grace, and where Members had

agreed, partnership had not stood in the way of getting things done, a situation that the Leader hoped would continue into the future.

455. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS

Resolved: - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 25th January and 15th February, 2021 be received.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Watson

456. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2021-22 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

Further to Minute No.117 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15th February, 2021, consideration was given to the report that proposed the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2021/22. This was based on the outcome of the Council's Final Local Government Finance Settlement, budget consultation process and consideration of Directorate budget proposals through the Council's formal Budget and Scrutiny processes (Overview and Scrutiny Management Board), alongside a review of the financial planning assumptions within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

It was stated in the report that in setting the proposed 2021/22 budget, Cabinet had recommended an increase of 1.99% in the Council's basic Council Tax and an Adult Social Care precept of 1.0%.

The report proposed the revenue budget for 2021/22, an updated capital programme to 2023/24 and the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2022/23.

In moving the recommendations, the Leader thanked everyone who had contributed to the process of pulling the budget proposals together, in particular the Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services and her team, the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services and Finance, and Cabinet colleagues.

The Leader stated that after 11 years of austerity, and in the face of a global pandemic, it was unsurprising that councils across the country were under unprecedented financial pressure, with 12 councils being reportedly in discussion with the Government about additional support. The Leader stated that this was the same Government that had told councils that they needed to be more entrepreneurial, who were now saying that councils should not take risks.

The Leader noted that the 2019 Conservative manifesto had praised the virtue of low Council Tax, but that in the Spending Review, where an extra £2.2bn for councils had been announced, it had not been mentioned that 85% of this increase in available funding would come from higher Council

Tax bills, and not from the Government directly. The Leader noted that as a consequence it was not surprising that three quarters of councils with social care responsibilities were expecting to increase bills by the full 4.99% allowed in 2021. The Leader stated that while this showed that public services could not be run on fresh air, the Conservative Government were cutting the funding for road repairs in Rotherham by £2.6million, withdrawing half a million pounds of annual contributions to support the Council with Operation Stovewood and cutting regional economic growth funding to South Yorkshire by at least a third.

The Leader stated that according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, the most deprived parts of the country had seen their council budgets cut by nearly twice as much as the most affluent by the current Government, and that this showed that the Government did not understand communities like Rotherham

The Leader stated that the Council had not taken commercial risks, but instead had trusted public servants to deliver public services and that these decisions had been taken as they had been the right, rather than the easy thing to do. The Leader stated that because a long-term view had been taken, the Council Tax rise in Rotherham in 2021 would be below those of most other councils. The Leader noted that these difficult decisions had created a stronger reserves position than had been anticipated as well as enabling an additional £1.86 million of revenue spending commitments for the coming year.

The Leader referred to the Barnsley poet, Ian McMillan who had described the “sad mood music of austerity in a minor key” – the visible decline in the upkeep of communities. The Leader stated, however, that this year, in the grip of the Coronavirus pandemic, it had been laid bare the insecurity that far too many Rotherham residents live with. The Leader noted several real-life examples of how the pandemic had put residents under significant financial strain and pressure through no fault of their own.

The Leader stated that the greatest honour of his position was having the resources to make a difference to people’s lives. The Leader stated that in October 2020, whilst the Government had dallied, the Council had made sure that 10,000 children in low income families had received free school meals in addition to the 9,000 children who had received financial help towards the purchase of school uniforms. The Leader also referred to the decision that had been taken to prioritise the local Council Tax Support Scheme, and to the additional funding made available, and going further than many other councils by initially crediting eligible families with £200 and later with £450 towards essential bills that had meant that more than 14,000 low income working age households had had their bills for the current year effectively reduced to zero.

The Leader noted that the rise in child poverty had also meant that right across the country more children had come into the Care system. The Leader restated the Council's commitment to ensure that Children's Services were as strong as they possibly could be and noted that by 2021/22 an additional £20 million had been spent Children's Social Care than had been the case when he had become Leader. The Leader stated that for children, going into care should only ever be a last resort, which was why Family Group Conferencing had been included in the budget, so as to keep more families together.

The Leader noted with sadness that the insecurities created by the pandemic would not be fixed by the vaccine, but would be around for much longer and as such it was proposed in the budget:

- £102,000 to support 89 work placements for young people at risk of long-term unemployment, paid at the Real Living Wage.
- £100,000 to increase our existing support to food banks, and to develop a social supermarket to help those who are ready to move on.
- £150,000 of match funding to help people to stay in work and advance their careers.

Furthermore, the Leader advised that there would be more help available for new businesses to create new jobs, upgrading of business centres, as well building a new one, and that the additional millions of pounds secured in the devolution deal would be put behind the economic recovery.

The Leader detailed his commitment to deal with digital exclusion, as well as to making it easier for residents to get through to the Council by telephone, by committing £50,000 towards a £450,000 fund to be spent over the coming year that would help residents to get online and be more IT confident. The Leader also advised that it was being proposed to increase the Community Leadership Funds to help Councillors respond to local needs as well as increasing funding to support outreach youth work and improvements and events in libraries. The Leader advised that for the communities that had been so badly affected by flooding in 2019, whilst the Government had sat on its hands, £5.8 million of capital was being made available by the Council in order to accelerate the development of flood defence schemes.

The Leader noted the £1.8m that had been committed in the previous year towards new bins and street cleansing equipment, routine weed removal from dual carriageways, and a 7 days a week responsive Street Cleaning Service, and that this year an additional 4 Streetpride teams would be funded in order to make a visible difference across the Borough.

The Leader also referred to how the Council was meeting the shortfall in Government funding to ensure a £30 million redevelopment of the markets and central library could be progressed and to the new Towns and Villages Fund which would invest £4 million in local centres, so that

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the benefits were felt in communities across the area. The Leader also noted the Council's continued commitment to 1,000 new Council homes, and to the huge programme of investment in the area's roads.

The Leader stated that while the cynics would continue to say that these positive changes could not be done, that things could never change, or that the perfect should made the enemy of the good, everyone should take pride in how far the Council had already come.

The Leader stated that the continued agenda would be:

- A better Borough that rises to the expectations of our communities
- Good jobs, decent homes, public services that set people free
- And security for those who need it most, so we leave no one behind

The Leader concluded in stating that with each year that passed, the Council was able to build a little more on the foundations that were already laid, in order to secure the futures that the residents of Rotherham deserved and that now was not the time to put that at risk, but instead was the time for renewed purpose.

In seconding the recommendations, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services stated that the proposed budget was a budget that would support services for residents who had been negatively impacted by not just years of Government austerity, but also by the pandemic, noting that the most deprived and vulnerable residents had been impacted most. The Cabinet Member advised further that years of effective financial management had allowed investment proposals to be included in the budget that would benefit residents, the town, and that would ensure that no one was left behind. The Cabinet Member stated that the budget had been built on the principles of reducing inequality and improving social justice in Rotherham.

The Cabinet Member noted the continuing financial challenges that years of austerity had created and would continue to create for the Council and stated that as such further challenging savings would need to be made. The Cabinet Member noted that whilst challenging, the delivery of savings would provide an opportunity to look creatively at how services could be delivered better.

The Cabinet Member concluded in thanking Cabinet colleagues, members of the budget working group, scrutiny and all Members who had contributed to the development of the budget.

At this point the Mayor advised that there had been an amendment proposed to the budget and that this amendment was detailed at Appendix B of the Mayors' Letter.

It was moved by Councillor Cowles and seconded by Councillor R. Elliott:

“I wish to propose an amendment to the published budget proposals, that the following items to the total of £1.362m are removed from the revenue budget investments for 2021/22:

- CYPS 1 Additional support for Youth Work (£50k)
- CYPS 2 Expansion of Family Group Conferencing (FGC) (£130k)
- R&E 1 Additional street cleansing and grounds maintenance (Streetpride) (£489k)
- R&E 2 Planning Enforcement (£44k)
- R&E 4 Events that bring people together (£118k)
- R&E 5 Licensing Service (£150k)
- R&E 8 Restoration of Libraries Book Stock Budget (£50k)
- ACX 3 Community Leadership Fund uplift (£59k)
- R&E 3 ADVANCE careers support programme (£150k)
- FACS 2 Reducing customer call waiting times (£122k)”

I propose that the total funding of £1.362m from the removal of these budget investments will be alternatively proposed to be used to fund the estimated cost in 2021/22 of providing every child in the Borough, turning the age of 4 during the financial year, with a tablet computer. Additionally, should it be necessary, for half of those tablets to include one-year's limited data allowance. I would propose to work through this proposal further in consultation with schools and CYPS where my knowledge and experience is limited in order to decide how best this would be implemented to achieve the maximum benefit for the young people. The proposal contains £76,240 more than is needed to meet the estimated cost of the proposal for contingency purposes.”

In moving the motion Councillor Cowles noted that given the impact of the pandemic on the world, and on how people lived and worked, that it was essential that the Council must also change how it operated. Councillor Cowles reaffirmed his position that the Council should focus on activities that would attract green businesses and green jobs to the Borough.

Councillor Cowles noted the pandemic had highlighted the issue of unequal access to IT and the internet amongst children in the Borough and stated that it was essential that action was taken to address this in order to ensure equal access to education for all children. Councillor Cowles proposed that the budget be amended to enable all 4 year olds in the Borough to receive a tablet, as well internet access for those who did not already have access. Councillor Cowles detailed the estimated costs for the proposal as well as how he proposed that the budget be amended to release the funding that would be required. Councillor Cowles stated that it was essential all possible steps should be taken to enable equal access to education and that decisive action needed to be taken to

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ensure that no child in Rotherham fell behind in their education or had their life chances negatively impacted by not being having IT access.

Councillor Cowles stated tough budget choices needed to be made and that spending on children and education had to be a higher budget priority than the creation of one year road cleaning posts that would not provide long term benefits to the Borough.

In seconding the motion Councillor R. Elliott stated that as the future was the green economy, it was essential that investments were made in activities that would attract green businesses to the Borough. Councillor R. Elliott stated that the proposals detailed in the amendment that would provide all 4 year olds with a tablet would be a huge investment the in the Borough's children that would give them the best chance to succeed in life.

Councillor Watson noted that he was sympathetic to the sentiments behind the amendment but stated that given the budget position of the Council the focus of spending had to be directed at those in the Borough who were in most need and in providing services such as the Family Group Conferencing that would support families to stay together.

The Leader concurred with Councillor Watson that he too was sympathetic to the sentiment of the amendment but noted that the Council had been actively working to ensure that the children and young people across the Borough who lacked IT equipment had received the support they needed with IT equipment throughout the pandemic. The Leader stated that making this provision universally would not be good use of resources. In response to Councillor Cowles' questions, the Leader advised that the extra posts that were being created were one year contracts that would be reviewed during the year. The Leader noted that the creation of the posts, for example to enable increased street cleaning and footpath maintenance, would enable the Council to deliver increased levels of service to residents, and as such was the right thing to do. The Leader also noted that prior to the pandemic, Rotherham had had one of the fastest growing local economies both regionally and nationally.

Councillor Carter noted his agreement with the premise of the motion but advised that the proposals detailed in the motion did not address the wider actions needed to enable the Borough to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

In response to the issues raised in the debate, Councillor Cowles reaffirmed that his specific concerns around jobs and the local economy were about the lack of green jobs that were being created in Rotherham and noted that it was essential for economic recovery in Rotherham that action was taken to create skilled jobs in the green economy. Councillor Cowles advised that he did not believe employing an additional street cleaning team for one year would make a significant difference to the street cleanliness, noting that despite large amounts of spending on street

cleaning, the litter situation in Eastwood had not improved over recent years. Councillor Cowles reaffirmed his belief that all 4 year olds in the Borough should be issued with IT equipment in order to ensure equal access to education.

On being put to the vote the motion was declared as lost.

Members then proceeded to debate the original motion.

Councillor Carter stated that despite promises made by the ruling administration around the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Living Wage, many care giving staff in Rotherham were not receiving the recommended wage. Councillor Carter noted concerns regarding the wasteful spending carried out by the ruling administration in the delivery of some Council services, including the Planning Service, and stated that residents were facing increased Council Tax bills to pay for Labour's wasteful spending. Councillor Carter also noted his concerns regarding the money received from the Government to support local businesses that had not been distributed and had been returned to the Government. Councillor Carter advised that as the budget was both wasteful and also provided poor services to residents, he would be voting against the proposals. Councillor Carter stated that effective scrutiny was not carried out at the Council due to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board being a Labour Member.

Councillor Allen stated that she was really proud of the proposed revenue and capital investments in her portfolio of Cleaner, Greener Communities that would make a positive difference to residents across the Borough, such as the increased street cleaning and planned improvements to foot and cycle paths that would encourage active travel. Councillor Allen also noted the proposed investments, linked to addressing climate change that included the expansion of the tree planting programme and the creation of a one year fixed term Climate Change research post that would enable the evidence to be gathered that would then inform the activities required of the Council to address the climate emergency. Councillor Allen stated that she could not understand how anyone could be against the proposals that would have such a positive impact for the Borough, were focused on issues of concern for residents and that would also help Members carry out their community leadership role.

Councillor Hoddinott noted that the content of the budget reflected the political choices that had been made and that responded to issues of concern raised by residents. Councillor Hoddinott stated that the spending plans detailed in the budget were being proposed despite a decade of austerity, and that the spending proposals in many areas, such as road maintenance were filling the gaps left by reductions in Government funding. Councillor Hoddinott welcomed the continued development of flood protection schemes, noting the positive impact that the schemes would have on residents in this area. Councillor Hoddinott noted her thanks to Councillor Sheppard for his continued work on this issue.

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Councillor Hoddinott also noted the changes to Household Waste Recycling Centre opening times and to the Bulky Waste Collection Service that would lead to improved services for residents. Councillor Hoddinott thanked officers and Members for their contribution to the development of the budget and also noted her thanks to staff who had worked through the very difficult past year to ensure that vital services had continued to be delivered.

Councillor Roche stated that Councillor Carter should focus on the needs of residents rather than in election posturing, noting that had Councillor Carter attended scrutiny meetings he would have known that the Council had, in April 2020, ensured that all those employed in care giving roles were in receipt of the recommended Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommended living wage. Councillor Roche noted that despite the significant and continued financial pressures faced by the Council, that good financial management had ensured that it had not been necessary to make any cuts to services. Councillor Roche noted the unprecedented demands that the pandemic had placed on the Council and its finances, and that had it not been for the essential spending required to deal with the pandemic, Adult Care Services would have ended the year with a balanced budget. Councillor Roche welcomed the proposed funding that would enable a purpose-built REACH centre to be delivered that would provide the best possible service to service users.

Councillor Lelliott noted that despite the years of austerity that had been imposed on the Council, the Council was still in a position due to good financial management to invest in projects and services, including development of the town centre, that would benefit residents. Councillor Lelliott noted the positiveness of the budget and its focus on supporting and improving the skills of young people in the Borough who had been so impacted by the budget. Councillor Lelliott noted her thanks to all the Council staff who had worked throughout the pandemic delivering frontline services.

Councillor Steele, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board noted the scrutiny that the budget proposals had gone through and that members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, after careful scrutiny, had supported the budget proposals. Councillor Steele, in response to the points around scrutiny raised by Councillor Carter, stated that he was independent from the administration and always challenged Cabinet Members on their proposals, noting that if Councillor Carter attended scrutiny meetings he would have been aware of this.

Councillor Beck noted the rigorous processes that had involved all Members and Scrutiny in the development of such a positive and forward-looking budget. Councillor Beck highlighted budget proposals around investment in aids and adaptations that would support residents to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. Councillor Beck noted how the Council continued to invest in housing of all types and tenures across the

Borough and how the Council continued to ensure that all Council-owned homes met the national Decent Homes Standard.

Councillor Jepson noted that while he was not supportive of every aspect of the budget proposals, that as a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, he had been fully involved in discussions that had contributed to its development.

Councillor Cowles stated that while he was not opposed to large sections of the budget, he opposed some of the choices that had been made including the proposal to increase Council Tax. Councillor Cowles stated that the ruling administration had made its choices, with those choices prioritising additional road sweeping provision for one year over providing IT access for children, which in his opinion was the more pressing need. Council Cowles asked why other local authorities managed to end the year under budget when this never happened at Rotherham and stated that budget management at the Council was not strong enough.

Councillor Watson noted that in the current year, as in every year, the proposed budget reflected the political choices that had been made. Councillor Watson noted the extra pressures that the demands created by the pandemic had created for services, and stated that these demands had made an increase in spending on Children and Young People's Services essential as well as negatively impacting on the delivery of previously agreed savings in the Directorate. Councillor Watson highlighted several areas of proposed investment in the budget that were designed to support and keep families together, which he noted had to be top priority.

Councillor B. Cutts stated that he thought much of the cleansing and road sweeping activity carried out across the Borough was done inefficiently with too many staff involved and questioned why children's homes in the Borough had been closed down. Councillor Mallinder questioned how many meetings Councillor Carter attended each year, as he did not attend scrutiny meetings.

Councillor Atkin commended the budget proposals, in particular the proposals on the expansion of the tree planting programme that would improve the local environment and make the Borough a better place for residents to live in. Councillor Atkin also noted the income that the Planning Service generated and the excellent service that it continued to provide. Councillor Pitchley noted how the budget proposals supported the values of the Labour administration and showed how much could be delivered despite the reduced resources available to the Council. Councillor Pitchley welcomed how the proposed budget would support families, improve the local environment and improve people's lives.

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The Leader responded to the issues that had been raised in the debate. The Leader agreed with the comments that had been made regarding the decisions that had been taken in making the budget proposals being based on strong political values.

In response to Councillor Carter, the Leader stated that the funding received from the Government for business support had attached a set criteria on how it could be used, and that the Council had paid out as much of the funding as it had been able to, given the set criteria. The Leader noted that the costs related to the delivery of the award-winning Planning Service had reduced substantially in recent years. In response to Councillor B. Cutts, the Leader repeated that the children's homes that had been closed had been done so as they were sub-standard. In response to Councillor Cowles' comments regarding inefficient practices regarding cleansing activities the Leader advised that many road cleaning tasks were dangerous and extra personnel were needed when these were carried out to ensure everyone involved remained safe. In response to Councillor Mallinder the Leader advised that Councillor Carter would have attended 8 Council meetings a year.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and the Council's Constitution, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

For: Councillors Alam, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Bird, Brookes, Buckley, Clark, Cooksey, Cusworth, D Cutts, Elliot, Ellis, Fenwick-Green, Hoddinott, Jarvis, Jepson, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, Mallinder, McNeely, Marles, Pitchley, Read, Roche, Russell, Rushforth, Sansome, Senior, Sheppard, Simpson, Steele, Taylor, Tweed, Vjestica, Walsh, Williams, Watson, Whysall, Wyatt and Yaseen.

Against: Councillors Albiston, Carter, Cowles, B Cutts, M Elliott, R Elliott, Hague, Jones, Marriott, Napper, Reeder, John Turner and Julie Turner.

Abstentions: None

Resolved: -

- (1) That the Budget and Financial Strategy for 2021/22, as set out in the report and appendices, including the proposed budget adjustments and investments, a basic Council Tax increase of 1.99% and an Adult Social Care precept of 1.0%, be approved.
- (2) That the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2022/23, including the carry forward of the 2020/21 £4m budget contingency and £3.5m Treasury Management Savings in a Budget Strategy Reserve, be approved.

- (3) That the Reserves Strategy, as set out in Section 2.8 of the report, be approved, noting that the final determination of Reserves will be approved as part of reporting the financial outturn for 2020/21.
- (4) 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, as detailed at Section 2.12 of the report, be noted and accepted.
- (5) That the consultation feedback from the public and partners following public consultation on the Council's budget for 2021/22 which took place from 5th January, 2021 to 26th January, 2021, as detailed at Section 4 of the report, be noted.
- (6) That the proposed increases in Adult Social Care provider contracts as set out in Section 2.4 of the report, be approved.
- (7) That the investment proposals, as set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 2 of the report, be approved.
- (8) That the Council Fees and Charges schedules for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 7 of the report, be approved.
- (9) That the application of the Business Rates Reliefs, in line with Government guidance, as set out in Section 2.9 of the report, be approved.
- (10) That the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme, as presented at Section 2.10 and in Appendices 3A to 3F of the report, be approved.
- (11) That the Treasury Management matters for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 4 of the report, including the Prudential Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy, be approved.
- (12) That the Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2021/22, as set out at Appendix 5 of the report, be approved.

- (13) That any 2020/21 revenue outturn position underspend be transferred into the Council's reserves and be held within the Budget Contingency Reserve.
- (14) That any 2020/21 un-ringfenced Covid funding balances be transferred into the Council's reserves to meet Covid related pressures and costs in 2021/22.
- (15) That the Capital Programme budget continues to be managed in line with the following key principles:
- i. Any underspends on the existing approved Capital Programme in respect of 2020/21 be rolled forward into future years, subject to an individual review of each carry forward to be set out within the Financial Outturn 2020/21 report to Cabinet.
 - ii. In line with Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules 6.17 and 13.9, 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.
- (16) That the Statutory Resolution of Council Tax for 2021/22, as set out Appendix 6 of the report, incorporating precept figures as advised from the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough, be approved.

457. CALENDAR OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THE 2021-22 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Consideration was given to a report, submitted in accordance with the rules of procedure as detailed in the Council's Constitution, that set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

Resolved: - That the Calendar of Meetings for the 2021/22 Municipal Year be approved.

Mover: - Councillor Alam

Seconder: - Councillor Watson

458. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14 the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board presented a report that provided Council with an update of overview and scrutiny activity since the last update had been received in November 2020.

Mover: Councillor Steele

Seconder: Councillor Napper

459. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - BUILDING USE

A report was submitted to inform Council of the findings of the findings and recommendations from the Working Group on Building Use which was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Councillor Mallinder, who had led the Working Group thanked all the Members who had taken part in the review for their contribution.

Resolved: -

That the briefing be noted, and the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration:-

- a) That the principle be agreed that the future usage of buildings be determined in accordance with the needs of services located therein.
- b) That, prior to buildings being brought back into use by staff or the public, consultation take place with Trade Unions and staff following completion of risk assessments in respect of the building or location concerned.
- c) That any decision to return employees to Council buildings beyond the minimal number that have been required to be present throughout the pandemic be made having regard to advice from the Corporate Health and Safety Team and Human Resources, as well as being subject to Government guidance around the safe use of Council buildings.
- d) That Members be notified when main operational buildings are to be brought back into use, specifically the Town Hall as the civic hub of the Borough.
- e) That, having regard to the positive implications associated with virtual meetings in respect of the Council's carbon footprint, the Leader of the Council lobby the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to legislate for the ongoing provision of virtual meetings beyond 7th May, 2021.

- f) That Asset Management and Digital Services work together to identify the necessary changes or solutions required in Riverside House and Rotherham Town Hall, as well as any changes required to equipment or software for Members and officers, to enable continued use of remote working whilst permitting physical presence in a Council building.
- g) That the Head of Democratic Services prepare guidance and training on the procedures and operation of hybrid meetings.

Mover: Councillor Mallinder

Seconder: Councillor Steele

460. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - HOMES ALLOCATIONS POLICY

A report was submitted to inform Council of the findings of the findings and recommendations from the Working Group that had been established to review the proposed amendments to the Council's Homes Allocation Policy.

Councillor Mallinder, who had led the Working Group thanked all the Members who had taken part in the review for their contribution.

Councillor Beck, the Cabinet Member for Housing, welcomed the review that had taken place, noting that due to the importance of the policy that any proposed changes had been thoroughly considered and reviewed.

Resolved: -

That the briefing be noted, and the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration: -

- a) That the briefing be noted.
- b) That sustained funding for staff on the homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation teams be safeguarded.
- c) That revisions to the Policy be undertaken to ensure clarity and readability throughout the document, especially as regards application processes and shortlisting criteria.
- d) That notation about prolific offenders be included in the information provided to the Housing Assessment Panel.
- e) That quality standards regarding the proper completion of housing forms be reaffirmed to officers.
- f) That rent arrears be added to the scrutiny work programme for 2021-22.

- g) That single occupants of larger homes owned by the Council be given the opportunity to downsize.

Mover: Councillor Mallinder

Seconder: Councillor Steele

461. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - CALL CENTRE COMMUNICATIONS

A report was submitted to inform Council of the findings of the findings and recommendations from the Working Group on Call Centre Communications that had been established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Councillor Steele, who had led the Working Group, thanked all the Members who had taken part in the review for their contribution.

Resolved: -

That the briefing be noted, and the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration:-

- a) That the Council further promotes a digital-first route for customers to access Council services.
- b) That regular data updates be provided to the Leader and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on a six-monthly basis.
- c) That the Customer Service Standards of the Council be reaffirmed to officers, particularly in respect of written communication with customers.

Mover: - Councillor Steele

Seconder Councillor Napper

462. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS

Councillors Buckley, Carter and Simpson, on behalf of the Brinsworth and Catcliffe Ward, gave an update on their Ward priorities as follows:-

- Funding received by The Centre, Brinsworth, to run the Hot Food Projects serving 2 course meals twice a week to elderly and vulnerable residents.
- Purchase of gazebos and portable equipment by the Brinsworth Arts Group to allow the Group to meet outside safely
- 'Brighten up Brinsworth' at Christmas with funding provided to install Christmas lights, hold virtual Christmas events, donate prizes and support the illumination of the life-size nativity scene in Catcliffe Kiln

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- In conjunction with the Housing Hub, funding provided to install security lighting outside several ground floor flats at Fortway Road and Roman Crescent
- Replacement of fence panel on Victoria Street had helped to reduce incident of anti-social behaviour
- Parking buddies provided at Waverley Junior Academy to help promote road safety outside schools
- In partnership with Catcliffe Parish Council match funding provided for a fly-tipping camera which would be monitored by the Council. Deployment of the camera would be decided by the Parish Council and local residents
- Casting Innovations commissioned to work with Neighbourhood staff and local schools to provide 30 bird boxes and 20 bat boxes to encourage wildlife across the Ward and 2 apple trees to be planted in Catcliffe which will hopefully be the start of a planting programme
- Funding provided to Friends of St George's Churchyard to clean and clear the graveyard
- Community Chest grants to Catcliffe and Brinsworth Parish Councils to help refurbish play areas and purchase an inclusive swing and a Cobra swing
- Community Chest funding for new outdoor shelters/equipment to maintain the bowling greens at Catcliffe and Brinsworth Bowling Clubs
- Friends of Howarth supported with an outdoor classroom and play equipment providing additional space for pupils to safely learn and play outside
- Funding provided to Crafty Talk to make 70 'craftolation' packs and given to those shielding/isolating during lockdown helping their mental health and wellbeing
- RUCST, misconception of youth, was a virtual Journalism programme that taught young people skills and equip them with the tools to become keen journalists
- Friends of Brinsworth Manor purchased two outdoor clocks for the playground to help with outdoor play and education

Councillors Lelliott, Steele and Roche, on behalf of the Hooper Ward, gave an update on its Ward priorities as follows:-

- Tackled social isolation amongst the elderly by working with the communities and Neighbourhood Team to reach out to as many groups as possible
- Supported the newly formed Brampton Community Gardeners by providing funding for plants and gardening equipment
- A celebration event held to thank all the local groups who worked tirelessly to make the area a better place to live
- West Melton Park had received additional equipment including a MUGA area, exercise equipment, benches and tables and the planting of trees. Residents had been consulted throughout the whole process and gave their full support

- Outdoor summer activities had taken place in a Covid safe manner
- Assisted the community with the delivery of food parcels or hot meals for those who were shielding or vulnerable. Food shopping, prescription collections and a befriending service was also available
- Covid safe Halloween activities and a Winter Wonderland had taken place
- Unfortunately Christmas 2020 had been much quieter due to the Covid restrictions but the West Melton Christmas tree had been lit
- Funding provided for redundant telephone kiosks to now house 2 defibrillator kiosks around the Ward together with one situated on the wall of a primary school and one on the wall of a local public house
- Plant pot holders and plants provided to the Brampton Volunteer Gardens for a small group of residents to brighten their village up in both the Brampton and West Melton areas
- Reinstatement of a public footpath that had been closed off separating 2 communities and stopping school children easy access to the school. Together with the people of the parish and local community group, the Parish Council had been challenged to re-open the footpath and the fencing removed to allow access
- Other groups funded included Brampton Junior FC, Brampton Youth Group, Brampton Volunteer Gardeners, Cortonwood Comeback Food Bank, Harley in Bloom, Harley Junior FC, Wath, West Melton and Brampton Litterpickers, Cortonwood Luncheon Club, Cortonwood Comeback, Harley Mission Rooms Trust, Wentworth Village Community Association, Men in Sheds, West Melton Allotment Society, Christmas Tree Barriers and Brampton Parish Council

The Ward Members thanked officers for their support during the last 12 difficult months.

Councillors Clark, D. Cutts and Hague, on behalf of the Keppel Ward, gave an update on its Ward priorities as follows:-

- Following complaints, funding provided for a barrier to the Sough Hall Road Surgery Car Park entrance to prevent the out of hours anti-social behaviour/littering
- Housing had provided security packs to the over 70's Council housing tenants; Ward Members had used extra funding to purchase the same pack for those private rented or owned their own properties
- Cacti fencing to 2 garage sites at Kimberworth Park following reports of anti-social behaviour
- St. John's Green lighting project to help people feel safe and continue to support local shops
- Together with the Rotherham West Ward, match funded the purchase of CCTV to record any criminal activities Droppingwell

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- Consultation with Green Spaces regarding the style and the positioning of the rustic benches funded by the Ward on Keppels Field giving views of Wentworth, Wentworth Woodhouse, the follies, Keppels Column, Greasbrough and beyond
- Working with Public Rights of Way, enhancement/renewal of the horse hops on entry to Keppels Field and Scholes Coppice to make it safer and prevent off road motorcycles
- Joint funding to remove hedges/replaced with fencing on Kimberworth Park Road
- A request submitted to the Road Safety Fund for enhanced safety improvements near the junction of Oaks Lane and Upper Wortley Road. This had been agreed and would be carried out shortly
- Operation Slowdowns had taken place in various areas within the Ward
- Traffic measures including traffic surveys had been undertaken on some of the more problematic routes in the Ward. The information had been used to purchase and position an illuminated street sign in Thorpe Hesley and new traffic signing on Thorpe Street
- Parking buddies installed outside Thorpe Hesley Primary School
- Unfortunately to Covid unable to do a similar Christmas event as in 2019
- Supported Wingfield Academy's OAP Christmas Party
- Funded new fishing tackle damaged during the flooding for Fishermen's Friends
- Provided funding for Kimberworth Park Community Partnership for food hampers for families at Christmas time
- Christmas trees provided for Kimberworth Park and Thorpe Hesley
- Kimberworth Park Community Partnership's Food Pantry was hoped to be operational in late spring where residents from the local area would be able to purchase food for a small contribution

Members thanked the Neighbourhood Team and all the partners they had worked with for all their work during the last 12 months.

463. NOTICE OF MOTION - STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Proposed by Councillor John Turner and seconded by Councillor Cowles.

"This Council believes that:

The Standards and Ethics Committee is not serving the people of Rotherham as a forum for justice, is unfair, biased and not transparent."

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared as lost.

464. NOTICE OF MOTION - THE 'RIGHT TO FOOD' TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE NATIONAL FOOD STRATEGY

Proposed by Councillor Sheppard and seconded by Councillor Cooksey.

“This Council believes that:

The ‘Right to Food’ should be incorporated into the National Food Strategy

This Council recognises that we are seeing a crisis of food poverty born out of the political choices and systemic failings created over the past four decades, which has now reached a tipping point for so many Rotherham residents. The figures are devastating for one of the richest nations in the world and highlight the inequality in the UK in 2021.

This Council notes:

- That there are consistently high rates of poverty across our Borough. There is growing concern amongst our health and care professionals about the current situation and the likely exacerbation of poverty figures due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and economic uncertainty as 2021 progresses.
- Between 2015 and 2019 End Child Poverty reported a 3.4 per cent increase in the number of children in Rotherham who live in poverty. The Rotherham Foodbank gave out 4,716 emergency parcels in 2019-20 and have helped 504 clients since January 2020. As there are other foodbanks operating in the area it is fair to assume that the real figure is likely to be much higher.
- The National Food Strategy is the first independent review of England’s entire food system for 75 years. Its purpose is to set out a vision for the kind of food system we should be building for the future, and a plan for how to achieve that vision. It argues that the Covid-19 crisis has brought into painful focus the flaws in the UK’s food system, especially its effect on the nation’s physical and mental health.

This Council supports the demand by The Right to Food campaign that the 11 million people in food poverty should be central to The National Food Strategy. Enshrining the ‘Right to Food’ into law would clarify government obligations on food poverty and would introduce legal avenues to hold government bodies accountable for violations.

This Council calls for the ‘Right to Food’ to be incorporated into the National Food Strategy. We ask the Chief Executive to write to Henry Dimbleby, who is heading the strategy, to further this request.”

On being put to the vote the motion was declared as carried.

465. COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO.16

At 7:05pm, with the meeting having run for over 5 hours and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.16, it was moved by Councillor Cowles, seconded by Councillor Fenwick-Green and resolved that the meeting be adjourned and be reconvened on Wednesday, 10th March at 2.00 p.m.