

COUNCIL MEETING
13th April, 2022

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor Jenny Andrews) (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, Atkin, Aveyard, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Barker, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, Brookes, Browne, Burnett, A Carter, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clark, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, Elliott, Ellis, Fisher, Griffin, Hague, Haleem, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Mills, Miro, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Roche, Sansome, Sheppard, Tarmey, Taylor, Thompson, Tinsley, Whomersley, Wilson, Wyatt and Yasseen.

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

142. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor explained that as her term of office was ending, she had been extremely busy meeting and thanking people for their support over the past 3 years. Many of the supporters had been to visit the Town Hall and the Mayor had hosted some of them at Wentworth Woodhouse for afternoon tea and a tour of the building. The Mayor had also visited Wentworth Woodhouse in March to celebrate International Women's Day along with the Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire, Master Cutler, and the High Sheriff among many others.

The Mayor welcomed the opportunity to report on a number of engagements:-

- Attendance at theatre performances including 'Our House, The Musical, Guys and Dolls (courtesy of the Chapelton Musical Theatre Society) and Curtains', a musical comedy 'Whodunnit' performed by Maltby Minors which was thoroughly enjoyed.
- South Yorkshire Veterans' Breakfast Club get together at Toby Carvery.
- Rotherham Grammar School Old Boys' Association annual dinner at Sitwell Park Golf Club.
- Friendship lunch at the Manor Barn, Kimberworth which aimed to reduce social isolation and loneliness through entertainment and lunch.
- Visit to the Wonder Years Nursery in Ravenfield which had been given an award for ensuring a high level of safety for children in its care.
- Rotherham's World Day of Prayer at the Minster.

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- A celebration of local brick industry and heritage at Swinton Brick Assembly Unveiling Ceremony.
- St Bernard's Catholic High School Career Fair.
- The Work-Wise Foundation which was an interactive Careers Showcase Event for schools, young people and families.
- The AESSEAL ceremonial signing of the Factory of the Future contract.
- The official launch of the Nayi Zindagi social enterprise project which creates positive awareness of its service to community members in and around Rotherham.
- The opening of the Treeton Community Centre outside area.
- The Brinsworth Academy Spring Fayre.
- The Jump Inc Autism Awareness Event.

The Mayor also advised that a couple of other fundraising events to support her own chosen charities had taken place including a charity race night at the New Inn Pub in Masbrough and a day-long raffle organised by Tesco at Dinnington. The Mayor thanked all of those who took part in those events.

The Mayor stated that she had been very lucky to attend a number of sporting events including the Rotherham Titans rugby match on 12th March, Rotherham United v Milton Keynes on 5th March and Rotherham United v Sutton United at Wembley on 3rd April. The Mayor explained what a fantastic day the trip to Wembley was and how she could not have asked for a better outcome for Rotherham.

Finally, the Mayor wished to place on record her thanks to the Mayoress for the support given throughout her time in office.

143. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

144. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications to report.

145. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 2nd March, 2022, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Allen

146. PETITIONS

The Mayor introduced the report and confirmed the receipt of one petition received since the last Council meeting which had not met the threshold for consideration by Council:

- Containing 643 signatures calling on the Council to “Improve Road Safety on Cumwell Lane/Kingsforth Lane.”

Councillor Ball and Councillor T. Collingham addressed the Council as part of the presentation of the petition.

Resolved:-

(1) That the report be received.

(2) That the petition be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for consideration.

147. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

148. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions to report.

149. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

150. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader presented his statement and put on record his thanks to the Mayor for her 3 years of service. He also thanked the outgoing Mayor of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, Dan Jarvis, who had decided not to seek re-election. The Leader explained that the Mayor had been a good friend to him over the years and had been elected at a time when there had been great uncertainty over devolution in South Yorkshire. The approach of the Mayor had brought people together for the good of South Yorkshire and he was owed a debt of gratitude by the people in Rotherham for the work he had done. He had secured hundreds

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of millions of pounds of investment in the region when it was most needed and led a co-ordinated approach to flood defence work and bus franchising.

An update on Council activity was given. The Government's Council Tax Rebate Scheme had been launched but the Leader explained that this was not related to Council Tax and was not a rebate. The first direct debit payments would be paid out by the end of April 2022 and the cheques would follow in May. The Council's Energy Bill Grant Scheme would be in place by the end of the month and details would be circulated to Members.

The DWP had put forward the Council for a partnership award in relation to the Kickstart scheme. This scheme aimed to help young people who were at risk of becoming long term unemployed by offering work placements paid at the Real Living Wage. Rotherham had done more than any other local authority in the region in terms of that work and that was testimony to the commitment by the Council to the young people within the Borough.

Work was due to start imminently on the Century Business Centre at Manvers and demolition works had commenced around Rotherham Market and the Rain Building. Construction of the flood barrier scheme around Riverside and Forge Island was well underway and those infrastructure improvements were required to make the borough more prosperous and a better place to live.

In relation to the comments about Mayor Dan Jarvis and his work on buses, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that one of the investments that had been secured was £15 million for 27 low emission buses. He expressed concerns over giving public money to private business and questioned what checks and measures were in place to ensure low emission buses would continue on the routes where they were most needed, specifically the Dearne routes which do suffer with connectivity issues?

The Leader explained that the electric buses would be based in Rawmarsh due to the air quality concerns and the links to Barnsley and Doncaster. At present, the charging infrastructure would not allow the buses to deviate from the agreed routes around Rawmarsh but the development of more electric charging infrastructure could make this a possibility in the future. The Leader agreed to provide further information outside of the meeting in relation to the contractual requirements concerning the routes.

151. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester made reference to Minute No. 125 (COVID Recovery Fund) and asked whether the £500,000 Energy Bill Scheme was a replication of schemes already in place such as the British Gas

Energy Trust and whether any checks or measures were in place to ensure residents use other schemes first? He also asked whether any of the remaining £679,000 from the Fund could be used to support the night-time economy, which had suffered due to COVID, until the Forge Island scheme was completed?

The Leader responded by explaining that it could be possible to use some of the remaining Fund to support the night-time economy but that any proposals would have to go through the correct channels as there was likely to be a huge demand for the funds across many sectors. He asked that Councillor Bennett-Sylvester email him with any further details so that they could be fed into the discussions.

In relation to the Energy Bill Scheme, the Leader explained that the priority was making sure the money was available to residents as quickly as possible. As such, there were no pre-requisites that required residents to try other schemes first. It was, however, anticipated that most residents that sought help through this scheme would come via advice groups and other options would likely have been discussed as part of that advice.

Councillor Ball made reference to Minute No. 116 over concerns that his question about why the figures for referrals from the Council, in relation to issues such as hoarding and houses, to the Fire Authority had not been properly addressed. The Leader agreed to pick this matter up outside of the meeting.

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 28th March, 2022, be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

152. NOMINATIONS - MAYOR-ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR-ELECT FOR THE 2022-23 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Nominations had been invited for the positions of Mayor-elect and Deputy Mayor-elect for the 2022-23 Municipal Year.

One nomination for the position of Mayor had been received:-

“That Councillor Khan be elected Chair of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing (2022/23) Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Proposer:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

On being put to a vote, the motion was carried by majority.

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Councillor Tajamal Khan was appointed Mayor-elect for the 2022-23 Municipal Year. His election as Mayor will take place at the Annual Meeting on 20th May, 2022.

One nomination for the position of Deputy Mayor-elect had been received:-

“That Councillor Taylor be elected Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing (2022/23) Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Proposer:- Councillor Pitchley

Secunder:- Councillor Keenan

On being put to a vote, the motion was carried by majority.

Councillor Robert Taylor was appointed Deputy Mayor-elect for the 2022-23 Municipal Year. His election as Deputy Mayor will take place at the Annual Meeting on 20th May, 2022.

153. NOTICE OF MOTION - SCRUTINY

It was moved by Councillor Adam Carter and seconded by Councillor Charlotte Carter that:-

This Council notes:-

- 1) The scrutiny process in Rotherham is currently chaired by Councillors from the Majority Group
- 2) That pre-scrutiny meetings happen where the press and public are unable to attend
- 3) Written scrutiny reports need to provide councillors, the press, and the public with the details needed to scrutinise decisions and policies of the Council
- 4) Council officers do important work in delivering services on behalf of the Council

This Council believes:-

- 1) The scrutiny process works best when it is chaired by Opposition Councillors
- 2) Pre-scrutiny meetings are anti-democratic, secretive, and are a means for the Majority Group and Cabinet to avoid proper scrutiny
- 3) Written scrutiny reports lack detail, namely:-
 - a) Specific, outcome-based objectives
 - b) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), metrics and quantitative data
 - c) Evidence-based assessment of benefits made
 - d) Feedback from service users

- e) Measures to mitigate the impact on those with Protected Characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)
 - f) Measures to tackle the Climate Emergency
 - g) Benchmarking against comparator local authorities
- 4) Council officers work hard to answer questions from Councillors and appreciate the work they do in delivering services on behalf of the Council
 - 5) Verbal presentations by officers on agenda items at Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) and Select Commissions are often too long and reduce the time available for questions and proper scrutiny

Therefore, this Council resolves that:-

- 1) Pre-scrutiny meetings are abolished
- 2) The Council's Constitution be amended within three months to:-
 - a) Require the Chair of the OSMB be an Opposition Councillor
 - b) Require the Vice-Chair of OSMB to be a Majority Group Councillor
 - c) Require the Chairs of the Select Commissions be allocated to recognised Council Groups based on proportionality
 - d) Require the Vice-Chairs of the Select Commissions be allocated to recognised Council Groups based on proportionality, so that the Chair and Vice-Chair are not from the same Council Group
- 3) Opening verbal presentations by officers on agenda items discussed at OSMB and Select Commissions be no longer than five minutes in duration and include an introductory narrative, and a summary of key points
- 4) Each Council service has a plan to be carbon neutral
- 5) Each Council service produces and regularly updates Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion plans to ensure that those with Protected Characteristics are not disproportionately affected
- 6) Scrutiny reports must contain:-
 - a) Specific, outcome-based objectives
 - b) KPIs, metrics and measurable data and rationale for these
 - c) Evidence-based assessment of improvements made and benefits realised by services
 - d) Feedback from service users
 - e) Assessment of measures to mitigate the impact on those with Protected Characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)
 - f) Assessment of measures to tackle the Climate Emergency
 - g) Benchmarking against comparator local authorities and rationale for why these local authorities were chosen
 - h) An analysis of value for money

Following debate, the motion was put to the vote and was declared lost.

154. NOTICE OF MOTION - ROTHERHAM STANDS WITH UKRAINE

It was moved by Councillor Miro and seconded by Councillor Tarmey:-

That this Council:-

- notes with shock and horror the deeply upsetting situation in Ukraine and believes that Vladimir Putin's attack on Ukraine is an unprovoked, unjustifiable outrage and a heinous violation of international law that will have tragic consequences;
- takes a stand in complete solidarity with the Ukrainian people as they bravely resist this assault;
- notes the horrific ordeal facing many as they flee to safety and who now face a future that they could never have imagined;
- notes that for many years Rotherham has formed strong partnerships with the towns of Zabrze in Poland and Cluj-Napoca in Romania, two countries that neighbour Ukraine that have responded admirably to the humanitarian crisis that this conflict has caused;
- notes that this is not a war waged by Russian citizens but by its President and his high-ranking military officials;
- notes that there are those in Russia who are standing up for what is right and making their voices heard against their own Government, and these people must be commended, and notes that due to brutal police crackdowns on freedom of speech it is dangerous to voice anti-Putin sentiments; and
- believes that the people of the Borough have a long and proud tradition of supporting, welcoming, and caring for those in need, and we should be proud of the fact we can provide a safe place in their time of need.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Write to the Home Secretary to offer to do what we can to house displaced Ukrainian families – making clear that we will go over and above to offer sanctuary and shelter to those that need it.
2. Support, promote and work in partnership with local charitable, community and religious organisations who are working to provide resources and assistance for those affected and displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.
3. Work with our local school community to urgently find placement for any school age children seeking refuge in Rotherham Borough.
4. Promote opportunities to support other organisations working on the ground in Ukraine to provide humanitarian aid and shelter – these include but are not limited to the British Red Cross, Disasters Emergency Committee, Unicef, the UN Refugee Council, and those in our partner towns in Poland and Romania.
5. Ask our Members of Parliament to raise with the Home Office the issues children, who don't have a passport, are currently experiencing at the UK border.

This Council also recognises it has a role to play to ensure Russian political and financial interests are not promoted in any of its activities and investments.

This Council therefore further resolves to:

1. Immediately request a report from the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority on the investments our Council's Pension Fund currently has in Russian companies. Where these investments still exist, Council calls on the Pension Fund to make immediate arrangements to divest any shares in Russian companies.
2. To review immediately any contractual commitments the Council has with Russian suppliers, particularly for energy, and take steps to cease these at the earliest opportunity.
3. Write to the Home Office to give Rotherham Council's support to stricter sanctions on the Russian regime.

This Council also resolves to ask all Group Leaders sign a joint letter to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary calling on the UK Government to match words with action and;

1. Offer sanctuary to Ukrainian people in their hour of need without having to go through the prolonged visa application process.
2. End our dependence on Russian energy and fast-track the transition to renewable energy sources.
3. Impose the severest economic, financial, technical and cultural sanctions on the Russian state.

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

155. NOTICE OF MOTION - MUNICIPAL CEMETERIES AND DIGNITY FUNERALS LTD

It was moved by Councillor Thompson and seconded by Councillor Tinsley that:-

This Council notes that:-

- Problems persist with the management of several Municipal Cemeteries and funeral services across the Borough, which are contracted out by RMBC to Dignity Funerals.
- At times poor management and lack of preparation of plots has led to funerals being cancelled at very short notice, causing significant distress to families.
- Problems with the maintenance of Municipal Cemeteries include:-

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- Overgrown grass, weeds and brambles on several sites, making cemeteries look untidy, and covering graves and headstones.
 - Damage to graves, headstones and other cemetery features during cutting due to a mixture of carelessness and the sites being so overgrown that these features are not visible when vegetation is finally cut.
 - Poorly timed cutting of vegetation, for example during flowering season, which has a negative impact on wildlife.
 - Poor facilities on some sites, including lack of access to water, no bins, and few benches, which make it difficult for families to maintain gravesites and spend time in Cemeteries.
- New 'Friends of...' groups have repeatedly asked for information on what they can/can't do, as well as key points of contact, and have still not received this.
 - Volunteers with these 'Friends of...' groups put in a significant amount of their own time and effort to maintain cemeteries, at times taking on responsibilities that Dignity Funerals is contractually obliged to carry out but is not doing so.
 - When something goes wrong, residents say they do not have a clear complaints procedure to follow and have felt that their complaints have been dismissed, sometimes repeatedly, by Dignity Funerals.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:-

- Request a detailed improvement plan and works schedule from Dignity Funerals, to be provided to RMBC within two months, and then scrutinised at the earliest opportunity and progress monitored by the Improving Places Select Commission.
- Request RMBC Bereavement Services provide 'Friends of...' groups with clear guidelines, policies, protocols, and key points of contact – ideally in a short handbook – as soon as possible.
- Request RMBC and Dignity Funerals agree, implement, and publicise a clear and fair complaints procedure within three months.
- Ask the chair of OSMB to consider how scrutiny can most effectively ensure lessons are learned from the contract between RMBC and Dignity Funerals, including the original contract negotiations and contract management since then.

An amendment to the motion from the Labour Group had been received. It was moved by Councillor Alam and seconded by Councillor Hoddinott that the motion be amended as follows:-

This Council notes that:

- **[Insert] The Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) manage several municipal cemeteries in the borough on behalf of the Council: East Herringthorpe, Cemetery and Crematorium, Greasbrough Lane Cemetery, Greasbrough Town Lane**

Cemetery, Haugh Road Cemetery, High Street Cemetery, Masbrough Cemetery, Moorgate Cemetery and Wath Cemetery. [to here]

- **[Delete] Problems persist with the management of several Municipal Cemeteries and funeral services across the Borough, which are contracted out by RMBC to Dignity Funerals.**
- **[Delete] At times [Insert] There are reports of** poor management and lack of preparation of plots has led to funerals being cancelled at very short notice, causing significant distress to families.
- **[Delete] Problems with the maintenance of Municipal Cemeteries include [Insert] The maintenance is further contracted out and there are reports of:**
 - Overgrown grass, weeds and brambles on several sites, making cemeteries look untidy, and covering graves and headstones.
 - Damage to graves, headstones and other cemetery features during cutting due to a mixture of carelessness and the sites being so overgrown that these features are not visible when vegetation is finally cut.
 - Poorly timed cutting of vegetation, for example during flowering season, which has a negative impact on wildlife.
 - Poor facilities on some sites, including lack of access to water, no bins, and few benches, which make it difficult for families to maintain gravesites and spend time in Cemeteries.
- New 'Friends of...' groups have repeatedly asked for information on what they can/can't do, as well as key points of contact, and have still not received this.
- Volunteers with these 'Friends of...' groups put in a significant amount of their own time and effort to maintain cemeteries, at times taking on responsibilities that **[Insert] Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) [Delete] Dignity Funerals** is contractually obliged to carry out but is not doing so.
- When something goes wrong, residents say they do not have a clear complaints procedure to follow and have felt that their complaints have been dismissed, sometimes repeatedly, by **[Insert] Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) [Delete] Dignity Funerals.**
- **[Insert] That the Cabinet Member has led on requiring improvements in the contract from the Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG). That has included a regular contract management process, better recognition of equality needs including longer times for short-notice burials, and improvements to the facilities at East Herringthorpe.**

- That there have been extensive scrutiny session looking at the contract, including by Improving Places in September 2021, September 2020, February, June and December 2019, January and July 2018, site visits in 2017 and September and December 2016.
- There is an Performance Management Framework which identifies key areas for improvement and contract management process with the Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) and this goes at least annually to Scrutiny. This process has led to improvements in relation to: free child burials across all types of services, longer opening hours at the Crematorium, physical improvements to the Crematorium, and lower cost headstone maintenance. The Improving Places Select Commission may wish to look at this in more detail, noting that their last recommendation in September was for it be looked at again in 12 months.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

- **[Delete] Request a detailed improvement plan and works schedule from Dignity Funerals, to be provided to RMBC within two months, and then scrutinised at the earliest opportunity and progress monitored by the Improving Places Select Commission.**
- Request **[Delete] RMBC Bereavement Services [Insert] Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG)** provide 'Friends of...' groups with clear guidelines, policies, protocols, and key points of contact – ideally in a short handbook – as soon as possible.
- Request **[Insert] Crematoria and memorial Group (CMG) publicise their complaint process at the sites, and that Councillors use the casework system for resident's concerns. [Delete] RMBC and Dignity Funerals agree, implement, and publicise a clear and fair complaints procedure within three months.**
- **[Insert] That scrutiny members on OSMB are provided with the minutes of previous scrutiny sessions with the Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG), and that all members are invited to the next planned Improving Places scrutiny session on municipal cemeteries.**
- **[Delete] Ask the chair of OSMB to consider how scrutiny can most effectively ensure lessons are learned from the contract between RMBC and Dignity Funerals, including the original contract negotiations and contract management since then.**

The amendment was put and carried and became the substantive motion.

The substantive motion now read:-

This Council notes that:

- The Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) manage several municipal cemeteries in the borough on behalf of the Council: East Herringthorpe, Cemetery and Crematorium, Greasbrough Lane Cemetery, Greasbrough Town Lane Cemetery, Haugh Road Cemetery, High Street Cemetery, Masbrough Cemetery, Moorgate Cemetery and Wath Cemetery.
- There are reports of poor management and lack of preparation of plots has led to funerals being cancelled at very short notice, causing significant distress to families.
- The maintenance is further contracted out and there are reports of:
 - Overgrown grass, weeds and brambles on several sites, making cemeteries look untidy, and covering graves and headstones.
 - Damage to graves, headstones and other cemetery features during cutting due to a mixture of carelessness and the sites being so overgrown that these features are not visible when vegetation is finally cut.
 - Poorly timed cutting of vegetation, for example during flowering season, which has a negative impact on wildlife.
 - Poor facilities on some sites, including lack of access to water, no bins, and few benches, which make it difficult for families to maintain gravesites and spend time in Cemeteries.
- New 'Friends of...' groups have repeatedly asked for information on what they can/can't do, as well as key points of contact, and have still not received this.
- Volunteers with these 'Friends of...' groups put in a significant amount of their own time and effort to maintain cemeteries, at times taking on responsibilities that Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) is contractually obliged to carry out but is not doing so.
- When something goes wrong, residents say they do not have a clear complaints procedure to follow and have felt that their complaints have been dismissed, sometimes repeatedly, by Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG).
- That the Cabinet Member has led on requiring improvements in the contract from the Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG). That has included a regular contract management process, better recognition of equality needs including longer times for short-notice burials, and improvements to the facilities at East Herringthorpe.
- That there have been extensive scrutiny sessions looking at the contract, including by Improving Places in September 2021, September 2020, February, June and December 2019, January and July 2018, site visits in 2017 and September and December 2016.

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- There is an Performance Management Framework which identifies key areas for improvement and contract management process with the Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) and this goes at least annually to Scrutiny. This process has led to improvements in relation to: free child burials across all types of services, longer opening hours at the Crematorium, physical improvements to the Crematorium, and lower cost headstone maintenance. The Improving Places Select Commission may wish to look at this in more detail, noting that their last recommendation in September was for it be looked at again in 12 months.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

- Request Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) provide 'Friends of...' groups with clear guidelines, policies, protocols, and key points of contact – ideally in a short handbook – as soon as possible.
- Request that Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG) publicise their complaint process at the sites, and that Councillors use the casework system for resident's concerns.
- That scrutiny members on OSMB are provided with the minutes of previous scrutiny sessions with the Crematoria and Memorial Group (CMG), and that all members are invited to the next planned Improving Places scrutiny session on municipal cemeteries.

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

156. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover:- Councillor Baker-Rodgers Seconder:- Councillor Cowen

157. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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

Mover:- Councillor Roche Seconder:- Councillor Cusworth

158. LICENSING BOARD AND LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester advised of a correction to the Licensing Board Committee Minutes of 25th February, 2022, as he was present at the meeting.

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Board Committee (as corrected) and Licensing Board Sub-Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Ellis

Seconder:- Councillor Hughes

159. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover:- Councillor Atkin

Seconder:- Councillor Bird

160. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

Mover:- Councillor McNeely

Seconder:- Councillor Griffin

161. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were no questions.

162. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

(1) Councillor Whomersley submitted a question asking what amendments were being made for the second Levelling Up Fund bid for Dinnington and if the Council was on track for the deadline?

As Councillor Lelliott had left the meeting at this point, a written answer would be provided.

(2) Councillor Mills asked how many people had signed up to become a Snow Warden last winter and how effective the service was?

Councillor Beck stated that the Council's Snow Warden service was a huge success with 572 volunteers to date. This was a significant increase on numbers in previous years which had been the result of a drive for more volunteers.

The Council's Snow Wardens were volunteers who gave their own time over and above Council services, and the aim was to support them, so it was not a matter of measuring their performance. However, Councillor Beck did believe the service has been very effective in local areas in supporting the overall response to wintry weather. Councillor Beck wanted to put on record his thanks to the large number of residents who were already signed up as Snow Wardens, for their hard work and support and

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he encouraged others to get involved and help their local community in the future.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mills stated that he and other Conservative Members had applied to be Snow Wardens in November 2021 and had never received their packs. He asked if this was another failure of the Labour-run Council and how many more failures would be delivered?

Councillor Beck apologised for the failure to deliver the packs but stated that had he been made aware of the matter sooner, i.e. before Spring, he could have addressed the matter. He encouraged any Members that wanted to become Snow Wardens to email him and he would pick the matter up.

(3) Councillor Griffin stated that he was of the understanding that South Yorkshire's bid for funding in relation to bus service improvements – cheaper tickets; moving to simpler ticketing; and new buses – had been rejected by the Conservative Government. He asked what the Leader expected to be the impact and consequences of that decision?

The Leader expressed huge disappointment in the fact that the bid for the South Yorkshire Bus Improvement Plan had been rejected by the Government.

This meant Rotherham would not benefit from:-

- a cap on daily and weekly fares, access to more cashless ticketing to create an easy to use system.
- it would not be able to fund the plans for a wider network of bus priority measures leaving buses continuing to be stuck in traffic and making services less reliable.
- the Borough would have fewer new bus shelters with real time information, less support for new on-demand services and no funding for free bus travel for under 18 year olds.

and all that together meant that South Yorkshire and Rotherham particularly, would continue to fall further behind other parts of the country.

It was the fundamental problem of this kind of short term competitive bidding process that the Government seemed addicted to – one place wins, another has to lose. It was what happened when politicians saw this all as some sort of political game to be played, rather than a matter of ensuring that people received the decent basic services that everyone should be entitled to.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Griffin asked what impact this would have on the bus franchising proposals?

The Leader explained that there would be no immediate impact on the bus franchising proposals as that work was now underway. It could be an indirect consequence of the rejected bid that franchising was now more likely but the Leader would continue to keep Members updated on any developments.

(4) Councillor Whomersley stated that the new solar powered bins on Dinnington High Street were overflowing and asked if there was a problem with the bins and if so, had it been fixed?

Councillor Beck understood that there have been some intermittent problems with the alerts on a small number of solar bins, which meant that they had not always been sending alerts when they should have been, and this may have affected Dinnington High Street. He explained that this problem had now been rectified, but to let him know if there were any further problems.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Whomersley stated that he had spoken to an employee who emptied the bins and it was stated by this employee that he had received no training on how to empty the new bins nor did he have access to them. It was asked whether it would be a good idea to provide the training and a key for access?

Councillor Beck explained that awareness training had been provided on how to empty the new bins, however, it was not complicated and not that different to what was used before. Councillor Beck stated that he wished to speak to Councillor Whomersley about the matter after the meeting.

(5) Councillor Whomersley stated that he had heard the Council was looking at the potential to bring leisure centre facilities into Dinnington and asked whether this was possible with Maltby and Aston leisure facilities in the surrounding areas?

Councillor Sheppard explained that, as part of the development of the Levelling Up Fund bid for Dinnington, and in light of representations from the local area, there had been some consideration given to the possibility of a new leisure centre. However, it was advised that there was no viable plan for any such facility at the moment.

The cost of a new leisure centre along the lines of those at St Ann's or at Aston would be around £10m in capital (Sport England, 2021) and £1.3m in revenue (based on the current contract). In addition any new leisure centre would be likely to have financial implications for the Council's current PFI contract for leisure centres.

Whilst it was technically possible, those costs in totality would seem to place any such development well beyond the available resources, even if Levelling Up Funds could be secured, without an overwhelming amount of long-term private sector funding.

(6) Councillor Mills asked whether the Cabinet Member would support reducing the speed limit outside Ravenfield Primary School to 30 miles per hour in the interests of safety?

Councillor Beck stated that there were no proposals to date to lower the speed limit on Moor Lane North, outside of the Primary School, to 30 miles per hour.

There were a number of existing measures on Moor Lane North, outside Ravenfield Primary School, that had been put in place to address road safety over the last few years including:

- 'School 20' signs, which flash up at pupil arrival and leaving times to improve awareness of school activity;
- Billy and Belinda (children shaped) bollards to highlight the presence of the school to passing motorists; and
- a Clearway Traffic Regulation Order on the School Zig-Zag lines to discourage parking directly outside the school gates.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mills stated that the 20 miles per hour speed sign no longer worked. He questioned whether it would take the death of a child to get the speed limit reduced?

Councillor Beck confirmed he would follow up on the issue of the road sign. In terms of the speed limit, Councillor Beck confirmed that he would take Councillor Mills' question as a proposal and would discuss the matter with officers and provide feedback.

(7) Councillor Baker-Rogers asked that given the unprecedented rise in energy prices, what advice about and access to home energy saving measures was the Council giving to residents?

Councillor Sheppard explained that the Council offered advice to residents through the "Community Energy Rotherham" page on the Council's website and social media. This was a scheme that the current administration had introduced over the last 2 years. The service provided advice on what energy saving measures people could take, and what to do if your supplier was to become insolvent, as well as advice on debt management.

The Community Energy Team at the Council also delivered advice on a one-to-one basis to individual residents. The impact on residents of the rising energy prices was evident as demand for the service has tripled in

the last month. Now that COVID restrictions had been removed, a programme of events was being developed to deliver Energy Saving Workshops throughout the Borough to residents. Residents would be informed through social media, the Council website and Council information portals and would be able to turn up on the day or register for one-to-one support sessions.

Additionally, advice had also been sent out to Members through the Ward update. A useful information leaflet had also been distributed a month prior to the meeting which signposted residents that were struggling with energy costs and other costs to relevant help.

In terms of energy prices, the best advice the Council could offer was for residents to remain on the standard rate and be protected by the Price Cap as this was currently the cheapest available option, although it was expected that the price cap would increase again in October 2022. It was expected that many more residents would struggle with the choice between eating and heating in Winter 2022 and the Council would continue to do what it could to help.

(8) Councillor Mills explained that the Council had received £10,000 to install a zebra crossing on Flash Lane, however, the residents of Bramley were yet to see the money or the zebra crossing. Councillor Mills asked where it was?

Councillor Beck explained that the funding contribution received by the Council for Flash Lane dating back to a 2005 planning agreement related to the provision of improved pedestrian crossing facilities, and did not specifically require the provision of a zebra crossing.

In 2011, the monies received were invested in the installation of 2 pedestrian tactile drop crossing points and conversion of grass verge to hard surfacing adjacent to the playground.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Mills stated that Bramley Parish Council and residents were under the impression that a zebra crossing was going to be installed. Given that it was over 15 years since the planning agreement, could the residents have the zebra crossing?

Councillor Beck reiterated that the money had been spent for its intended purpose. In terms of any additional road safety measures, such as a zebra crossing, proposals could be made through the Road Safety Programme and details on how to do this would be circulated to Members in the coming weeks.

(9) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked what was happening to celebrate the 600th birth anniversary of Archbishop Thomas Rotherham in 2023?

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Councillor Sheppard explained that to celebrate the anniversary, Rotherham Council's Museum, Arts and Heritage Service would research the Rotherham Archives and Museum Collections for items related to the Archbishop Thomas Rotherham and create a digital programme and small exhibition at Clifton Park Museum with items from the collection. As with all events, local school children would be invited to attend and learn more about their town.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that this was a story that needed telling loudly and proudly and that the celebrations needed to be promoted.

Councillor Sheppard agreed that local history needed to be celebrated and passed onto future generations so he would make sure plans were progressing.

(10) Councillor Hoddinott asked, with the good news that HS2 would no longer cut through parts of Rotherham, was it known when the Government would finally end the project and remove safeguarding from properties?

Councillor Beck explained that the answer to the question was, shamefully, no; it was not known when the Government would finally end the HS2 project and finally relieve Rotherham's residents of the blight inflicted on their properties and on their lives.

The position in the Government's Integrated Rail Plan was that the route would remain safeguarded until, at earliest, the review of rail connectivity between Sheffield and Leeds was complete. There was no timescale yet set for this.

The Leader had written to the Government highlighting the continuing blight resulting from the safeguarding and to seek clarity of timescales for the withdrawal of that safeguarding of the HS2 alignment.

Councillor Beck explained that many residents in his Ward of Wales were impacted by this issue with people having no certainty over their future and not being able to get on with their lives. He reiterated the Leader's statements to Government that this must end soon.

In her supplementary, Councillor Hoddinott expressed concern at the lack of any progress and asked for confirmation that the Council would continue to press for the removal of the safeguarding?

Councillor Beck confirmed that they absolutely would and that they would not drop the issue because it was in the interests of Rotherham Residents. The Council had also submitted formal representations to the Transport Committee in Parliament, outlining the impact the safeguarding of the properties was having in Rotherham.

(11) Councillor Thompson asked what the actual figure of CSE victims in Rotherham was since 2017?

Councillor Cusworth stated that since the beginning of 2017 to 8th April, 2022, there had been 584 individual children and young people that CYPS had worked with where it was believed that there was a risk of CSE.

This did not of course mean that all of those children had been abused, and certainly not that they had made a disclosure.

To give a little further context, nearly half of those children were regarded as being at “low” risk, with 78 considered at “high risk”.

Of course, there might also be children who did not come into contact with services.

As Members would be aware, the Council would continue to regularly publish the number of children being supported through the Evolve Service as part of the Council Plan performance reports, so Members would have easy access to that information.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Thompson explained that she had now been given 3 different responses to the same question and whilst she understood the difficulties in recording the number of victims accurately, it was not acceptable to have unreliable data in 2022. She asked what was going to be done to sort that out?

Councillor Cusworth stated that she did not believe that the data was unreliable. Some young people were subject to more than one risk assessment which could confuse figures. The figures were the most up-to-date available.

(12) Councillor Thompson asked where the up-to-date CSE action plan, that had been aligned to the recommendations from the Jay and Casey reports, was and could access to it be provided?

Councillor Cusworth explained that when the Council discussed the Conservative groups motion at Council in November, the Council asked the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board to review the Partnership’s Strategy to Tackle and Prevent Child Exploitation. That strategy, supported by an operational action plan, was the relevant document in terms of responding to CSE in Rotherham. It was the responsibility of the multi-agency Child Exploitation Delivery Group. The strategy could be found on their website.

Those documents were not a direct response to the recommendations of the Jay and Casey reports, which were of course the subject of the Council’s Intervention and Improvement Plan over a number of years.

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More information about that work was still available on the Council's website.

The first part of the review that was asked for had been conducted by the independent reviewers and had provided substantial assurance, and the second part, reviewing the Strategy, was now underway. Once that review was complete in the next few weeks Councillor Cusworth suggested that the documents be referred to Members for formal consideration through Scrutiny, if that was what Members would wish.

In her supplementary, Councillor Thompson stated that some of the problems identified by Professor Jay within South Yorkshire Police were still problems today as shown by the IOPC report and SYP's own strategic profile. Without proper assurance, it could not be guaranteed that the problems identified by Professor Jay within the Council had not either continued or re-emerged. Referring back to the motion from November Council, Councillor Thompson claimed that the Council had stated there were no problems and that it was a whitewash. Referring back to her original question, she asked where the up-to-date CSE plan was as it was showing an incomplete online?

Councillor Cusworth explained that substantial assurances had been given by the independent review in stage one of the report. When the Commissioner's left Rotherham they were confident that the actions taken had led to the required improvements across Children and Young People's Services and Scrutiny etc. Councillor Cusworth reiterated that Scrutiny was the best route for the plan to be accessed as it was a working document.

(13) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked what measures were in place to ensure tenants with furnished tenancies had their furnishings regularly replaced?

Councillor Brookes explained the process involved with furnished tenancies. Once a tenant requested a furnished package, an officer would arrange to visit the tenant within the first 2 to 3 weeks of the start of the tenancy to discuss their furnished homes package and complete an inventory check.

Each year, around the 12 months anniversary of the tenancy start date, the Furnished Homes Team visited the tenant to discuss the package, check the items and replace items where necessary.

However, tenants could contact the Furnished Homes Team at any point during their tenancy by email at rotherhamfurnishedhomes@rotherham.gov.uk or telephone 01709 382121.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that some residents, particularly elderly and vulnerable residents, were not getting the required updates and he was concerned that some were slipping through the net. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if could discuss the matter further with the Cabinet Member outside of the meeting?

Councillor Brookes stated that she would be happy to take the matter forward outside of the meeting.

(14) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked what was the total collective amount paid in charges for Rothercare on top of their rents by Council tenants who had not been in receipt of the Rothercare Service in the 2021/22 financial year?

Councillor Roche explained that the Council allocated a number of council homes as 'Rothercare properties', where the rent included provision of Rothercare, at a cost of £3.10 a week, whether residents chose to use it or not. It was a similar principle to the Neighbourhood Centres connected to many of the Council's bungalow complexes.

Most of the tenants received help through Housing Benefit or Universal Credit that, therefore, covered some or all of the cost of the Service. There were 8,228 properties in Rotherham that had Rothercare equipment installed but only 1,360 paid the full cost. The Council did not collate the details of those tenants not choosing to participate in the Rothercare Service. Councillor Roche could not, therefore, tell Councillor Bennett-Sylvester how many properties were not using it, or any associated financial information.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester expressed concern that the answer was not known. He asked whether it would be a good idea to plan forward and find out how many people were using the Service in order to be prepared for an increase in demand for what was a very good Service?

Councillor Roche responded to the acknowledgement that it was a good Service by informing that it had dealt with 348,000 separate calls. There were plans to move the Service away from landlines and Councillor Roche agreed to discuss with the Strategic Director whether it would be possible to write out to all of the concerned properties to ascertain whether or not the Service was being used.

(15) Councillor Elliott noted that there was a public consultation on the proposed cycle lane on Main Street and Westgate and asked whether the Cabinet Member would guarantee that the results of the consultation would be acted upon and not ignored?

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Councillor Beck responded by stating that he was happy to confirm that the results of the consultation would be fully considered in informing how or if the scheme was progressed. He encouraged everyone to participate in the consultation which would close on 24th April.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Elliott stated that the proposal was so wrong in many aspects: it was a major reconfiguration of a junction that had recently been done; it would make access into Rotherham Town Centre even more difficult at a time when it was already struggling and make Westgate a back water for what, a couple of cyclists a day? He stated that public opinion was very much against the scheme and that there were many off-road options available to cyclists and money could be invested in those rather than wasting the money on this scheme. Councillor Elliott asked Councillor Beck if he would do the right thing and scrap the scheme in its entirety?

Councillor Beck reiterated that all of the responses from the consultation would be taken into account when making a decision on how to progress.

(16) Councillor Tinsley explained that with the sudden closure of Queens Corner Medical Centre, over 1,000 patients found themselves without a doctor in Maltby and asked what support was being given to assist patients in finding another local doctor?

Councillor Roche explained that this was an important matter for the Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group and that he was aware that the concerns had been raised directly to them. This was a matter for the CCG to resolve and resolve as soon as possible. Councillor Roche had been informed by the CCG that they had contacted all patients in order to find a new practice. More information on the support that was being provided had been requested.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Tinsley asked if communication between the Council and the CCG could be improved?

Councillor Roche explained that this was a matter for the CCG but confirmed that the CCG informed him that all patients had been written to and advised on how to register with an alternative practice – there were 3 in Maltby, Manor Field Surgery, Braithwell Road Surgery and Blyth Road Medical Centre, although some patients who lived further afield may find more local practices through the nhs.uk website.

Patients had been advised about how they could access any urgent medication requirements via NHS 111 while their registration with a new practice was completed.

Councillor Roche also explained that the reason for such closures was due to a national shortage of GPs and he expressed concerns over the possible privatisation of the NHS.

(17) Councillor Tinsley explained that residents on Strauss Crescent, Maltby, had been served with enforcement letters because waste had been flytipped onto vacant land that once had garages on it. He asked whether the Council would work with residents to clear the land rather than seek to serve enforcement letters?

Councillor Beck explained that the land in question was privately owned by a number of residents of Strauss Crescent and the Council did not have any responsibility for maintaining the land. As a result of a complaint received by the Council, the Council did, out of good will, undertake works to clear the land, to support the residents in fulfilling their obligations as land owners. Having done so, the Council sent letters to the land owners to remind them of their responsibilities.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley explained that he had not noticed any difference and that waste had not been removed. He asked if that could be followed up?

Councillor Beck restated that the land was not the responsibility of the Council. The Council had acted, out of good will, to clear the waste and if further waste had accumulated, the letter previously mentioned clearly set out the land owners' responsibilities.

(18) Councillor Tinsley asked that with 7 months to go to this year's Remembrance Sunday parades, had there been any progress on arrangements for Parish Councils or local groups wanting to close roads locally and arrangements over traffic management?

Councillor Sheppard explained that all actions in the motion to Council on 29th September, 2021, which included matters in relation to traffic were completed in time for last year's Remembrance Sunday Parade and would continue again this year.

In his supplementary statement, Councillor Tinsley thanked Councillor Sheppard for his clarification that the Council would pay for the road closures. He was sure the Town and Parish Councils would appreciate the gesture.

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that the Council had agreed to waive the costs associated with road closures for up to one parade in each Ward to allow residents to pay their respects on Remembrance Sunday.

(19) Councillor Tinsley asked whether there were any plans to change the Mayoral car to something a little bit greener?

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The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working explained that Rotherham Council had produced a Climate Action Plan which was acknowledged as being the best in South Yorkshire. The Council would of course therefore look at all options for the Mayoral car when it got to the point of being uneconomical, whether that be electric, hybrid or whatever else was around at the time.

(20) Councillor Tinsley had submitted a question asking whether parking enforcement was prioritised in Rotherham over areas such as Maltby?

As Councillor Lelliott had left the meeting at this point, a written answer would be provided.

(21) Councillor Monk asked what the Council was doing to support children from disadvantaged families over the Easter and Summer holidays?

Councillor Cusworth explained that there were a wide range of activities for disadvantaged families during the Easter holidays and a full list of open access opportunities for disadvantaged families was previously shared with Members in March. It had also been covered in the Members Briefing on the 5th April and promoted on the Council's social media platforms.

The Easter activities were in addition to the existing targeted support that was in place throughout the year to 1,326 families and, included in that, 2,917 children currently being supported by Early Help, and to the free school meal vouchers that the Council continued to provide this holiday.

Councillor Cusworth explained that she was looking forward to visiting Coleridge School and Wath Academy to see the activities that would be taking place and the healthy meals that would be part of the session.

Further examples of things happening this easter include:

- Free workshops for families at Clifton Park Museum, which tied in with the latest exhibition for Children's Capital of Culture
- U DO IT Dance @Thrybergh Academy ages 5-6y years
- Nova City – parkour, dance, aerial work, tricks and flips for children aged 6-16 years
- Computer Xplorers – coding, robotics, game design plus a Minecraft adventurer challenge for children aged 5-16 years
- Rotherham BMX – are offering football and BMX sessions. The perfect combination for ages 8-16 years
- Rotherham Theatres - on the 19th, 20th and 21st of April there would be free Arts Award training residentials at the theatre

With regards to the summer programme, this would be planned and developed once the Easter programme had concluded and evaluated.

163. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for consideration.