

COUNCIL MEETING
18th January, 2023

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

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

110. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year. A full update on Mayoral activity since the last meeting was included in Appendix A to the Mayor's Letter. The Mayor highlighted some specific events during the meeting which included hosting the High Sheriff's first Veteran's Seminar and attending 2 events celebrating the Ukraine Christmas.

The Mayor had visited Whiston and Coleridge Primary Schools and hosted pupils from Waverley Junior Academy at the Town Hall. He had also opened the new facilities at Aston Academy, attended Brinsworth Academy's Winter Community Fayre and visited Dinnington High School to see the Dinnington Community Boxing Group.

In the week prior to Council the Mayor had attended the Children's Capital of Culture – Making It Happen - manifesto launch which included performances from some of Rotherham's most talented young people.

The Mayor reminded Members that a public Civic event would be held on Friday, 27th January at 11.30 a.m. in All Saints Square to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barker, Burnett, Clark, Havard, Pitchley, Thompson and Whomersley.

112. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications received.

113. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 30th November, 2022, as corrected, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Allen

114. PETITIONS

There were no petitions to receive.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

116. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Mr. Adeel Hussain asked: In August last year, the Advertiser stated that the 'ridiculous Westgate Cycling Route was being scrapped' after Westgate businesses and residents challenged the Council's ill thought through and damaging cycling proposals. Can Rotherham Council give us an honest answer, is the Westgate Cycling Route going to be imposed on local businesses and people? Yes or No.

Councillor Beck explained that the Council did hear loud and clear the responses to the consultation and what had been said. He confirmed that the Westgate Scheme would not be taken forward as proposed, however, the Council was considering options that would ensure that the aim of improving access to the Town Centre for cyclists could still be met. The new proposed scheme would be drastically different from that proposed in 2022. All of the banned turns that were proposed as part of the Scheme would be scrapped and there were plans to enhance the parking offer for businesses on Westgate and their customers. The Council had listened and heard and as such, hoped to bring forward plans for the new Scheme very soon. It was hoped that the new Scheme would incorporate all of the views that had been submitted previously. Further, it was hoped that by building more residential units in the Town Centre there would be more custom for the businesses on Sheffield Road and Westgate.

In his supplementary, Mr. Hussain stated that, apparently, local businesses and residents were consulted but Mr. Hussain explained that he and others knew nothing about it until Councillor Yasseen mentioned it. Councillor Yasseen held a meeting about it and it was clear there was only one option and no opportunity for residents to direct the route of the Scheme. It therefore felt like a

pointless consultation. The community, not the Council, organised a campaign and nearly 800 residents completed a cycling survey which, in 2 weeks, showed that most were against the Scheme. There were sacrificial elements so that the Council could claim that they had listened to residents. Mr. Hussain asked that if a different Scheme was being proposed, why was the Council not consulting on that and allowing the local community to comment on the revised Scheme?

Councillor Beck explained that a drop-in session had been held in Riverside House prior to Christmas specifically for businesses on Westgate and a further one was scheduled for Friday, 20th January, at 2.30 p.m. in Riverside House. Letters had been sent out to businesses regarding that. Councillor Beck stated that the Council were trying to engage with the local business community, and this was evidenced by the 780 letters that were sent out as part of the original consultation. It was incumbent on the Council to take a balanced view, taking into account the impact on local businesses. Councillor Beck believed the new Scheme would be a positive thing as there would be much more parking for customers of the businesses to use and there would be hundreds more people living in the area due to the Council funded housing developments. This had to be balanced against the need for the Council to create safe spaces for cyclists and pedestrians to access the Town Centre and it was believed that the new plans, once brought forward, would do those things.

2. Mr. Arshad Ahmed asked: As stated in the Nov[ember] Council Meeting, as part of the contract with Dignity there is a requirement that Dignity should provide a 35 year plan for the burials in Rotherham. Can you confirm when this will be provided?

Councillor Alam explained that the Council regularly meet with Dignity about the Contract Management. As part of those meetings, Dignity have agreed to provide the 35 Year Plan this year.

In his supplementary, Mr. Ahmed stated that within the 5 year plan, Dignity needed to confirm that they will deliver that by the end of March 2023. Mr. Ahmed asked for an honest conversation as to why Dignity was saying one thing and the Council was not abiding by it.

Councillor Alam explained that when the contract was signed in 2008 there was an obligation on Dignity to provide the Council with a 35 year plan for the burials going forward but the Council had now asked Dignity to urgently review that and provide it within this financial year. If this did not happen there would be financial penalties.

117. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

118. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader stated that:

- There had been sad news from Liberty Steel in the past week and thoughts were with all of those affected following the companies announcement of 440 potential redundancies including 185 potentially in Rotherham. The company was undertaking a 45 day consultation period and Council officers had met with senior members of staff to identify the support that the Council may be able to offer to individuals who were affected. The picture would become clearer as the consultation progressed. The potential job losses were very unwelcome news at what was already a very difficult time for the local economy. The Leader stated that all Members who had followed the fortunes of Liberty Steel over the years would hope that this was a difficult spell that would pass, and green steel production would continue on those plants.
- The announcement at Liberty was not unrelated to the situation with the wider economy which was why the Mayor of South Yorkshire, Oliver Coppard, and the Leader were writing to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, urging the Government to take much more action. The 2 things they could do were to put in place a package of support for energy intensive industries and buy more British products.
- Over Christmas, the Council funded the £30 supermarket vouchers scheme for families with nearly 12,000 local children entitled to benefits-related free school meals. In addition, the Christmas Hamper programme had supported 300 families across the Borough.
- The Council had secured a "Money Saving Expert" column in the Rotherham Advertiser which would be authored every 2 weeks by an officer from the Council's Financial Inclusion Team.
- Just before Christmas the Council had been given an award from the DWP for its work on the KickStart Programme. The Council had taken on more KickStart work placements than any other employer in South Yorkshire. Of the over 60 people that took part, 25 had moved on to permanent employment with the Council which was a credit to both them and the staff that had worked to make that happen.
- The Holocaust Memorial Day event would take place in All Saints Square from 11.30 a.m. – 12.00 Noon on Friday, 27th January, 2023.

In response to the statement, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated the strategic industries such as steel should be under public ownership not individual ownership and this was something the Government should look at. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester also stated that Liberty Steel had large land holdings in the Dalton, Thrybergh and Aldwarke area and asked the Leader if anything had been looked at with the South Yorkshire Mayor regarding using those holdings as potential employment sources to either utilise capital or income systems and bring in extra employment to an area which has significant deprivation and struggles to meet some of the new employment areas that had been developed?

Councillor Bacon stated that, in relation to Liberty Steel, the Government was working closely with the industry to secure a sustainable and competitive future. The Government was also providing extensive support totalling over £800 million since 2013 on top of support via the Energy Bill Support Scheme. He asked the Leader to further expand on how the Council would work with the Government on this to support those potentially affected or concerned? The Government had also confirmed that businesses would receive a discount on high energy bills until 31st March, 2024, with a substantially higher level of support provided to energy and trade intensive sectors.

Councillor Ball made a statement in relation to the Leaders comments that the Government should “buy British.” He stated that the Council laptops were from a Chinese company.

In response to Councillor Bennett-Sylvester, the Leader explained that he believed there needed to be a mixture of public/private ownership but agreed on the importance of Government intervention to safeguard those industries. In relation to land holdings, the Leader stated he was not aware of any specific works but would take the question away and provide a written response.

In response to Councillor Bacon, the Leader stated that parroting a party press release was not going to help the 185 people in Rotherham who stood to lose their jobs because the Government had not come in to make enough of a difference. That was what was happening in their lives and what was happening because of their employer. The Leader welcomed any steps the Government was taking to alleviate that, but it was not enough to parrot the party lines; something had to be done to recognise the reality of the people in Rotherham. The Leader wanted to meet with the Government and work together to keep those people in work.

119. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Councillor Mills referenced the Local Neighbourhoods and Road Safety Schemes and asked if money was not spent in certain Wards, could that money be put back into the pot so that other Wards could make use of it?

The Leader explained that yes, the money would be recycled for other areas if not spent as allocated.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester also referenced the Local Neighbourhoods and Road Safety Schemes and asked if schemes in the second tranche could be amended and re-evaluated if required and how this would be communicated to Members?

The Leader explained that the schemes would be developed based on the representations of Ward Members, the input from the public and the statistical information available. Going forward, Ward Members should continue to be involved in the development of the schemes and there would be flexibility to ensure that appropriate schemes are delivered at the time.

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 21st November and 19th December, 2022, be received.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Allen

120. MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME REVIEW - APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Consideration was given to the report which explained that The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations, 2003 required an Independent Panel to review remuneration and pensions for Elected Members of Local Authorities at least every 4 years. Members were asked to note that the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was required to be convened to review the Members' Allowances Scheme of the Council, with a view to reporting its findings to the Council at a future meeting.

In response to questions, Councillor Allen confirmed that the findings of the IRP would be considered and debated by Members at a future Council meeting, and it would be for them to decide the appropriate actions for those recommendations. It was also confirmed that advice would be taken on how to broaden the membership of the Panel.

Resolved:

1. That Council notes that the Independent Remuneration Panel was required to be convened to conduct a full review of the Members' Allowances Scheme, with a view to reporting its findings to the Council at a future meeting.

2. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Monitoring Officer to appoint the 3 specific members of the Panel drawn from organisations listed in paragraph 1.4 of the report submitted.

Mover: Councillor Allen

Seconder: Councillor Read

121. MEMBERSHIP OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL, POLITICAL BALANCE AND ENTITLEMENT TO SEATS

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the membership of political groups on the Council; the political balance and entitlement to seats; and the membership of Committees, Boards and Panels. The political balance of the Council had changed due to changes in the number of Conservative (-1) and Non-aligned (+1) Members which took place in December 2022. The resignation of the Rotherham Democratic Party Councillor for Keppel Ward and results of the subsequent By-Election would be factored into the political balance report to Council in April 2023.

There were 149 seats available on Committees, Boards and Panels and under the calculation the Labour Group was entitled to 83 seats, the Opposition Group (Conservative) had reduced from 45 to 43 seats, the Liberal Democrat Group 10 seats and the Rotherham Democratic Party Group 8 seats. The seats allocated to the non-aligned Councillors had risen from 3 to 5.

Changes had also been made to the leadership of the Conservative Group as reported in the Mayor's letter. Councillor Barley provided an overview of her personal reasons for standing down as Leader of the Conservative Group and went on to thank Members across all parties and officers for the space and support provided to her during a very difficult time.

Resolved:

1. The appointment of the Conservative Group Leader (Councillor Ball) and Conservative Group Deputy Leader (Councillor Mills) be noted.
2. That Council note the new political balance of the Council as a result of changes in the number of Conservative and Non-aligned members which took place in December 2022.
3. That the entitlement of the membership of the political groups be agreed and such entitlements be reflected in Council's appointments of Members to Committees:

Improving Lives Select Commission

Councillor Barley – to be removed

Councillor Thompson – to be removed

Improving Places Select Commission

Councillor Hunter – to be removed

Health Select Commission

Councillor Thompson – to be removed

Councillor Hunter – to be added

Sheffield City Region Audit, Standards and Risk Committee

Councillor Barley (Substitute Member) – to be removed

Councillor Castledine-Dack – to be added

Licensing Board

Councillor Wilson – to be added

Trade Union Joint Consultative Committee

Councillor Wilson – to be added

Mover: Councillor Allen

Seconder: Councillor Read

122. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the work of the Health Select Commission and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board from June 2022 until end of December 2022. An update was provided in the form of an appendix to the report by the Chair of the Health Select Commission, Councillor Yasseen.

The update highlighted the work of the Health Select Commission which sought to make health and social care services fair, safe and accessible for everyone at the point of need. It also sought to monitor changes in how health and social care services were delivered locally and in line with priorities to reduce health inequalities by improving access to services and promoting prevention and early intervention approaches.

Changes in the organisation and commissioning of health services were noted along with the decision by Central Government to postpone the funding agreement decision for social care until 2025. This delay would mean service delivery locally would continue to face challenge.

Recommendations to Cabinet were being made following a review on Covid-19 Care Home Safety. Intermediate care and reablement would be examined by the Commission in March 2023.

A list of highlights regarding improving access to services and promoting prevention and early intervention were set out in the appendix along with details of pre-decision scrutiny and work with the Overview and Scrutiny

Management Board. Further information was also provided in relation to improving equalities and inclusion in Scrutiny.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

Mover: Councillor Yasseen

Seconder: Councillor T. Collingham

123. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR HELLABY AND MALTBY WEST

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward updates for Hellaby and Maltby West as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

The Strategy signalled a new way of working for the Council both for Members and for staff and covered every Ward in the Borough delivered through Ward Plans developed with residents to address local issues and opportunities. Ward Members were supported by the neighbourhood Team and worked with officers and residents from a range of organisations to respond to residents.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillors Andrews and Ball provided an update on activities in Hellaby and Maltby West Ward:

- There were 3 Ward priorities:
 - Protecting and improving the environment.
 - Support and develop initiatives to increase community and individuals' wellbeing.
 - Identify and support initiatives that improve Road safety.
- There had been partnership events with Hellaby Parish Council such as the Queens Jubilee event, funding for the Memorial Tree and a Hog Roast.
- There had been events such as Dementia Action Week and funding had been provided for Lost Chord Care home visits in addition to concerts and singalongs.
- A freezer and food had been supplied to Maltby Foodbank. Councillors placed on record their thanks to all the volunteers there.
- Councillors had supported Maltby Parish Council in provide hampers for families at Christmas.
- Road safety had been improved around Laburnum Parade with additional parking provided along with re-laid pavements and additional safety bollards.

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- Parking Buddies had been installed outside local schools.
- Improvements had been made to Hellaby Park including the drainage of spring water, seating and new play equipment.
- Work had been carried out to improve the urban environment such as the funding of community skips and litter picks.
- The important work done in partnership was raised.

Councillors Andrews and Ball placed on record their thanks to the Neighbourhood and Housing Officers along with partners for enabling them to carry out the above-mentioned activities.

Councillors Andrews and Ball wanted to do more to spread the message about what was being done across their Ward to residents and believed that a Community Day in Maltby Library could achieve this. Councillor Allen explained that she could help make that happen based on her experience of holding similar events.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

Mover: Councillor Andrews

Seconder: Councillor Ball

124. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR MALTBY EAST

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward updates for Hellaby and Maltby West as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

The Strategy signalled a new way of working for the Council both for Members and for staff and covered every Ward in the Borough delivered through Ward Plans developed with residents to address local issues and opportunities. Ward Members were supported by the neighbourhood Team and worked with officers and residents from a range of organisations to respond to residents.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillors Hunter and Tinsley provided an update on activities in Maltby East Ward:

- There were 4 Ward priorities:
 - Improving opportunities and facilities for children and young people.
 - Support existing and new community groups thrive and develop.
 - Develop and support initiatives to improve community safety and the environment.

- Support Maltby's local economy and improve the High Steet environment.
- Improvements had been carried out at Cherry Tree Park which had led to the planting of approximately 70 large tree saplings.
- School visits were also organised to the Park to deliver fund environmental education, craft and sport sessions. Further events were planned throughout the year.
- Free face-painting, gifts from Santa and a reindeer visit had also been funded.
- Work had also been carried out to help young people by arranging visits with senior Army Cadets and it was hoped that a detachment could be set up in Maltby.
- Events were organised to prevent isolation and loneliness following the pandemic. This included a cinema screening event and a monthly community singalong at the Salvation Army Church.
- Falls and Fitness prevention classes for people whose mobility was affected by Covid lockdowns were also funded.
- New litter picking equipment was purchased to help the community become litter free.
- Work had been undertaken with the Police to develop and support initiatives to improve community safety. This included providing funding to purchase a large stock of home security items to deter burglars. 'Who To Call' leaflets were also provided to residents.
- Parking Buddies had been funded for 3 of Maltby's Junior Schools to improve road safety.
- A pilot of a new Community Speed Watch was underway.
- A defibrillator had been purchased along with a number of bleed kits.
- Work was underway with the Masterplan for the High Street.
- WhatsApp groups with local businesses had been established.
- The 'Take A Seat' initiative was due to be launched.

Councillors Hunter and Tinsley placed on record their thanks to the Neighbourhood and Housing Officers along with partners for enabling them to carry out the above mentioned activities.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

Mover: Councillor Hunter

Secunder: Councillor Tinsley

125. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:

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

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers

Secunder: Councillor Cowen

126. LICENSING BOARD, LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved:

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

Mover: Councillor Ellis

Seconder: Councillor Hughes

127. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Planning Board be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Atkin

Seconder: Councillor Bird

128. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Alam

Seconder: Councillor Allen

129. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were no questions to designated spokespersons.

130. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

- 1) Councillor A. Carter asked: Residents reported that roads leading to Brinsworth Whitehill Primary School, including Cawdron Rise, were not gritted during the December snow. Will the Council commit to ensuring these roads are added to the priority list for gritting?

Councillor Beck explained that he believed those roads had been gritted, and that the road around Brinsworth Whitehill Primary School formed part of the primary gritting routes. Those routes were treated extensively during the recent cold week, including Cawdron Rise and Willowgarth Avenue and in addition to that other estate roads in the area around the School were included in the Community Routes which were also treated during the extended period of wintry showers.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter explained that although the immediate road outside the school, Howlett Drive, had been gritted, lots of the other roads were not gritted. Could assurance be given that this would be carried out in a timely manner if needed in future to ensure children could get to school safely?

Councillor Beck indicated that Howlett Drive was on the secondary route so expressed concern as to why a road on the secondary route was done and why a road on the primary route had not been gritted and he would take this up with the Service directly.

- 2) Councillor Reynolds asked: With the current economic climate will the Council consider the calling in of long-term debt e.g., Magna (£0.6M)?

Councillor Alam explained that the current economic climate was challenging. Whilst the calling-in of any long term loan may de-risk that particular loan, it would have no benefit to the Council's budget position in the short or medium term. Any repayment of a long term loan would simply be used to offset the related long term debtor balance that the Council holds in its accounts.

In his supplementary, Councillor Reynolds asked if it would be possible to recover that debt and use the funding in a better way?

Councillor Alam explained that it would go into the Council's long term debtor account so it would not benefit the Council in the short or medium term but recalling the loan could have a negative impact on businesses, who may lose jobs or need to stop trading. He confirmed that payments were being received.

- 3) Councillor Tinsley asked: When filing a report form on the Council's website, you receive a receipt of your concern or issue. When will a system be implemented where updates or completions of the report are given?

Councillor Read explained that the software to facilitate this was now in place and initial receipts were being produced. The Bulky Waste Collection Service was an example of this being used in practice, where an update was provided at each stage. It was the Council's intention to roll this out to all similar services across the next 18 months.

- 4) Councillor Reynolds asked: The new Camelia sculpture is called 'a large-scale visitor attraction'. How many more visitors are expected? How will this be measured? What is the total cost of this venture?

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Councillor Sheppard explained that the Camelia sculpture was commissioned by Gallery Town. The sculpture was not costing the Council any money as it had been led and funded by Gallery Town with external funding provided by Arts Council England. It was not felt that there was a target for the number of visitors, however, if you wished to know more, please speak to Gallery Town.

- 5) Councillor Reynolds asked: How will the £233K in fines on Dignity be spent?

Councillor Alam explained that the report was being presented to Cabinet on the 23rd January, 2023. This included over £100,000 on repairs needed to the perimeter of some of the Council's cemeteries including the restoration of the historic lychgate at the entrance to Maltby Cemetery and additional work on ensuring the needs of all our communities were met. The amount proposed in the report was £148K. The Council would consider any further proposals as they came forward but you would expect the Council would want to ensure that it was not spending money on items that were the responsibility of Dignity.

- 6) Councillor Hoddinott asked: Given that many people are struggling with higher energy bills, what is the Council doing to support places that give a Warm Welcome?

Councillor Sheppard explained that the Council recognised the impacts that rising energy prices and wider inflation were having on residents across the Borough. The Warm Welcome programme was open to residents at its libraries and at Clifton Park Museum ensuring that residents had a warm and comfortable space to pass time during usual opening hours, which came to a combined 571 hours per week.

The Council programme also included the provision of a range of additional activity sessions at all those locations, with hot drinks available along with being able to access advice.

In her supplementary, Councillor Hoddinott asked could more be done to promote this scheme and the activities provided.

Councillor Sheppard explained that Councillors could use their social media accounts, using information provided by the library's social media account along with working with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority on how to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

- 7) Councillor Hoddinott asked: The Household Support Fund was a temporary pot of money, which was supporting a lot of residents through difficult times. Do you support cross party calls from the LGA to make this fund a permanent part of council budgets so the council can better support residents long-term?

Councillor Sheppard explained that the Council did support the cross-party call for this to become permanent and hopefully for it to be increased as well. The Council was aware of how much difference it had made to residents over the last few months. It was an effective funding stream that allowed the Council to support all the most vulnerable residents in the Borough.

The fund had been used for a wide variety of services, and whilst the grant has detailed guidance and restrictions the first tranche had been used to support families, the second tranche focused on elderly residents. A few examples of what had been provided were:

- £899k for food vouchers to children eligible for free school meals for school holidays up to and including Easter 2023.
- £1.4m to support applications from households for assistance with cost-of-living increases through the Council's Energy Crisis Support Scheme.
- £45k allocation to support care leavers, being young people leaving foster or local authority care and living independently.
- £30k to support local VCS organisations to support vulnerable households over Christmas / New year.
- £90k to community food providers to ensure stocks were available.
- £25k to provide additional non-food products for inclusion in crisis food parcels covering personal hygiene, sanitary and household products.

- 8) Councillor Jones asked: In light of the email, we have all received informing us that due to the cost-of-living crisis the Town Hall will now be closed on Fridays, can you confirm if this has affected any evening meetings, if not why?

Councillor Allen explained that it had not affected any evening meetings because for the last 3 years, Friday had not been included in the 2 late evenings that the Town Hall opened and as such had closed at 4.30 p.m. every Friday.

In his supplementary, Councillor Jones asked why a political group was able to use the building in an evening when the residents of the Borough were not.

Councillor Allen explained that the Town Hall was available for use on Tuesdays and Thursdays as standard, however, there was a degree of flexibility on those days for anyone wishing to book the facility. Receipt of competing demands for use of the building on a particular day would be carefully considered.

- 9) Councillor Miro asked: The roadworks on Rotherham Parkway took too long to complete, but they had made journey times better on that stretch of the road. However, considering the recent tragic accident at the beginning of January, had a review of the safety of the road in that area been carried out since then, and what recommendations had been made if any?

Councillor Beck explained that the Capital project had been delivered on time and to budget. Upon completion an audit was carried out focussing specifically on the road safety, which was all okay. Unfortunately, there was a fatality on that road and condolences were offered to the family and friends of that individual, but it would be inappropriate to comment on any specifics relating to that accident.

In his supplementary, Councillor Miro asked about the enforcement of the regulations regarding safety that had been carried out since the accident.

Councillor Beck explained that ongoing monitoring was taking place of the new road layout. The Police were also involved in the monitoring of this. There were no views as to whether the new development was causing concerns in terms of road safety.

- 10) Councillor Reynolds asked: We're 364th out of 374 places in UK prosperity places. Bearing in mind that Labour have had total control of any decision making in Rotherham for many unbroken decades. Does Labour accept any principle responsibility for this pathetic record of performance?

Councillor Read explained that in her introduction to the report the CEO of the Legatum Institute, Baroness Stroud noted that the UK had declined in more areas than it had levelled up. She called for the Government to provide immediate support to the cost-of-living crisis and the commitment to boosting prosperity in areas that had previously been left behind.

In his supplementary, Councillor Reynolds asked if Labour accepted responsibility to the state of Rotherham.

Councillor Read explained that he would take responsibility for the services and functions that the Council delivered, accepting that the budget had been reduced by 35% by the Government over the past 12 years. He understood that the phrase 'Levelling Up' was being withdrawn from use.

- 11) Councillor Reynolds asked: Who was responsible for managing the Dignity contract?

Councillor Alam explained that the Council was responsible for managing the Dignity contract and as detailed in the reports provided to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board the responsibility for this currently rested with the Finance and Customer Services Directorate, in Legal, Registrars and Bereavement Services.

In his supplementary, Councillor Reynolds asked again who was managing the contract initially.

Councillor Alam explained that prior to 2021 the contract had been managed by Regeneration and Environment and he was assured that the annual reports had been considered.

- 12) Councillor Miro asked: The UK is not in good hands under the Conservatives, and members of nearly every public sector are considering strike action. Those problems, however, can be partly blamed on the international financial climate, not so for the debacle of the new Cumbria coal mine. Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that we should ban coal mines in Rotherham?

Councillor Allen explained that she did not believe that the Council could ban coal mines and other than preventing them being opened on Council land and following a similar approach used to that of fracking, few options were available. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) did discourage new coal mines unless specific criteria were met.

- 13) Councillor Atkin asked: Can the Cabinet Member inform us how many residents have downloaded the Rotherham Bins App?

Councillor Beck explained that the App had been launched at the end of the previous year, with 11,023 people have downloaded it so far. He encouraged Members to promote it.

In his supplementary, Councillor Atkin asked what the current figures were for recycling rates.

Councillor Beck explained that the year-to-date recycling figure was just under 47% which was an increase from 45%.

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- 14) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: RotherFed has been running a project to increase usage of several neighbourhood centres. What increases in revenue have been seen at the centres in question from hire for community groups and charges for non-residents who did not pay towards the centres in their rents?

Councillor Brookes explained that year to date, the fees collected were £953 with a quarter of the year still to go. The figure for the previous year was £569.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if this could be monitored going forward for anything where it could be considered a specific outcome especially with the rising costs of heating the centres.

Councillor Brookes explained that the monitoring could be shared going forward.

- 15) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: Before looking at increasing charges on top of rents for neighbourhood centre users in this year's budget will you assure us that you will look at increasing hire charges, increasing charges for non-residents attending activities and the efficiency of collecting these charges first?

Councillor Brookes explained that the charges were reviewed as part of the corporate fees and charges review. A review would be carried out regarding the efficiency of collecting the charges.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if the Improving Places Select Commission could consider the review into the efficiency of collecting the charges.

Councillor Brookes indicated she was content with that approach.

- 16) Question 16 was withdrawn by Councillor Reynolds at the meeting.
- 17) Councillor Mills asked: What measures are the Council taking to increase the percentage of perpetrators caught relating to fly tipping offences?

Councillor Beck explained that it was a priority of the Council that perpetrators were pursued. The Council worked with stakeholders, using CCTV. There was a lot of activity within this area. In the last data set, Rotherham took 2,694 actions relating to fly tipping, which was the 4th highest in the Yorkshire and Humber Region and higher than all Rotherham's neighbours in South Yorkshire. When you looked at fixed penalty notices for the same period, Rotherham was the third highest in the Yorkshire and Humber Region. The Council was working well to tackle this.

In his supplementary, Councillor Mills asked how effective the CCTV operations were to address this.

Councillor Beck explained that it was not an easy part of what the Council did, but significant investment had been made in this area.

- 18) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: What population increases have we seen in Boston Castle, Rotherham East and Rotherham West Wards over the past 10 years and to what extent are these increases driven by town centre living developments?

Councillor Allen explained that using the data currently available, between 2011-2020 the population in the areas increased as follows: in Boston Castle, it increased by 9.2%, in Rotherham East, it increased by 6.6%, and Rotherham West 2.2%. This was in comparison with the Rotherham average increase of 2.8%. Whilst numbers are not readily available, it was felt only a small amount of this increase would relate to town centre living.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained that the old Central Ward had seen a population decrease which illustrated that more needed to be done to increase the population of town centres. What reviews would be carried out, for example a report regarding the Forge Island development had indicated some of the residential element had been removed. He wanted to ensure that there was continuation to get people into the town centres to help their development.

Councillor Allen explained that there were 171 new homes planned for the town centre, 112 of which had been completed to date.

- 19) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: As it has for at least the last year a projector on a lamp post outside of Admiral Amusements on Bridgegate continues to project the message "Merry Christmas" onto the pavement. Is there any chance in the foreseeable future this can be switched off especially considering some of the ridicule it draws to the town centre?

Councillor Allen confirmed that the sign had now been switched off. Ideas for alternative projections were welcomed.

- 20) Councillor Tinsley asked: How many snow wardens have signed up for the RMBC Snow Warden Scheme over the last Year?

Councillor Beck explained that 73 people has signed up to the scheme.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked what could be done to promote the scheme further.

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Councillor Beck explained that the scheme was a tremendous success.

- 21) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: As evidenced by 24/7 traffic surveys and CSW activity, Ridgeway had issues with traffic volumes and speed as well as inconsiderate parking often linked to attendance at East Herringthorpe Cemetery. Considering this was a Borough-wide facility impacting locally could consideration be given to providing extra residents parking and parking enforcement for the areas?

Councillor Beck explained that there would be an opportunity through the Road Safety Programme to fund some improvements. Parking Enforcement Officers did cover that area. Residents only parking, would be difficult, as you could end up displacing the parking issues elsewhere.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if the Council should be looking at central schemes to relieve the parking issues that were in the area.

Councillor Beck explained that there was only a finite resource to improve areas across the Borough. The Council had invested in the Neighbourhood's Road Safety Programme that Members could use.

- 22) Councillor Tinsley asked: With the Old Lloyd's Bank on Corporation Street having reportedly been sold for 1 pound, has any conditions been put in place where RMBC could recoup money? For example, if the land or property was resold within a certain timeframe?

Councillor Allen explained that the property in question had not yet been sold but any sale would include obligations on the developer to bring forward re-development, which would be protected through a legal agreement.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked, would it be possible to know the value of that land or property?

Councillor Allen explained that the information sought was on confidential papers being presented to Cabinet on Monday, 23rd January, 2023.

- 23) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: There had been several instances of intimidation and harassment towards staff and contractors working at East Herringthorpe Cemetery in recent months. What powers did we or Dignity have to exclude persons taking part in such activity from the cemetery grounds?

Councillor Alam explained that people should be treated the way we would want to be treated ourselves so there should be zero tolerance. He understood that Dignity could use their powers and Dignity Senior Management had a duty of care to their officers.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked that any groups distance themselves from that activity on social media and actively report people to assist staff.

Councillor Alam explained that officers were working with Dignity to ensure their safety was paramount.

- 24) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: Since the last IPSC there have been several more instances of disrespectful parking and excess traffic for residents of East Herringthorpe as a result of evening and weekend funerals at East Herringthorpe cemetery. Can you please advise on any discussions with Dignity to reduce the impact of such funerals on local residents?

Councillor Alam explained that Dignity had confirmed that they had been working with funeral directors and the community to reduce the issues. He would ask Dignity to provide a briefing to Councillor Bennett-Sylvester and his Ward colleagues to show the activities being undertaken.

- 25) Councillor Tinsley asked: With changes in legislation around the disposal of foam upholstered furniture having come in place, what implications has this brought to the Council?

Councillor Beck explained that some changes had meant that some waste needed to be treated differently to how it had in the past. Extra space for this had been provided at the Household Waste Recycling Centres to accommodate those items. The site at Lidget Lane was too small to accommodate these items.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked what the Council would be doing to support residents to dispose of those items.

Councillor Beck explained that the opportunity to dispose of those items was available at other sites or via the Bulky Waste Collection Service.

- 26) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: What have been the costs in providing skips for individual tenants and what was the recovery rate on those costs for the current financial year?

Councillor Brookes explained that costs related to skip hire for tenants this financial year was £3,445. Information on the recharges would be provided as a written response.

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In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if something ought to be added to the next edition of Housing Matters about this and other supporting measures available to those who struggled to maintain their homes and gardens.

Councillor Brookes explained that the skips were more of an exception where the Council was working with the tenant and consideration would be given to the most appropriate means of communication for this.

- 27) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: Following the failure of the scheme to reduce congestion on the Mushroom Roundabout the problem remained and with several hundred houses set to be built in Thrybergh and Ravenfield was set to get worse. Can you please advise on any temporary measures that could be taken in lieu of a full scheme to relieve congestion in the area?

Councillor Beck explained that limited options were available other than encouraging people to walk, cycle or use public transport more. Unless specific fund was available to ease congestion on the roundabout, there was little that could be done at the moment.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked that going forward this remained a priority and help open discussions with Ward Members as there was increased car usage going through some of the more deprived areas of the Borough.

Councillor Beck explained that planning would consider any impacts on the road network for any future developments within that area.

- 28) Councillor Tinsley asked: Cross contamination of waste bins and bins being left out on the street were causing problems predominantly in Selective Licencing Areas in Maltby. What can the Council do to address this?

Councillor Beck explained that the Council worked with individual residents when needed. The bin App, website and calendars had information about what could and could not be put in each bin.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked if the Council would look to replicate other schemes, such as those carried out in Eastwood.

Councillor Beck explained that specific issues could be raised through Neighbourhoods if that support was needed.

- 29) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked: £47,000 s106 monies were set to be paid from developers to improve the Bill Winder play area in Thrybergh. Due to delays and current inflation, less can be done

with this money. Given this contribution could provisions be made in the 2023 budget to supplement this figure to provide a full replacement play area for the children of Thrybergh?

Councillor Sheppard explained that the S106 money was £45,600 and was inflation (index) linked. Therefore 50% of the money was due when half of the scheme was built with the remainder due at 80% completion. So the amount received at that time would be linked with inflation rather than when the agreement was originally signed.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester felt that it was still limiting what could be done with the funding and queried if that funding could be supplemented.

Councillor Sheppard explained that different funding streams were available at different times so this could be explored if needed.

131. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Mayor and Members wished to place on record their thanks to Dean Walton, Civic Officer, who would be leaving the Council. They thanked him for all his hard work supporting the Mayoralty and Members throughout his time in post.