

**COUNCIL MEETING
8th December, 2010**

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor McNeely) (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Ali, Atkin, Barron, Blair, Buckley, Currie, Cutts, Dodson, Donaldson, Doyle, Fenoughty, Foden, Ellis, Gosling, Goult, Hodgkiss, Hughes, Hussain, Jack, Kaye, Lakin, Littleboy, Mannion, Middleton, Parker, Pickering, G. A. Russell, P. A. Russell, R. S. Russell, St. John, Sangster, Sharman, Sims, Slade, Smith, Steele, Stone, Swift, Thirlwall, Turner, Whelbourn, Wootton and Wyatt.

A61 COUNCIL MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 27th October, 2010 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Sharman

A62 COMMUNICATIONS

(1) The Chief Executive submitted a petition from 67 residents of Catcliffe against the proposed opening of a footpath to the rear of Woodland Close/ Blue Mans Way, Catcliffe, which had been referred to the appropriate Directorate for consideration.

(2) The Chief Executive submitted apologies for absence from Councillors Austen, Burton, Falvey, Gilding, J. Hamilton, N. Hamilton, Havenhand, Hodgkiss, Johnston, Kirk, License, Nightingale, Rushforth, Tweed, Walker and Whysall.

(Councillor Hughes declared a personal interest in the petition on the basis that the footpath was to the rear of his own property)

A63 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

A64 STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee (Section B) (pages 12B to 13B) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Buckley

Seconder:- Councillor Middleton

A65 CABINET MINUTES

The Leader wished to place on record his appreciation to all staff who had managed to brave the weather conditions and ensure that essential services continued.

He also reported that ROAR (Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance) had been successful in securing £50,000 from the People's Millions Big Lottery Programme.

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet (Section C) (pages 64C to 87C) be adopted.

Mover :- Councillor Stone

Secunder :- Councillor Sharman

(A short adjournment took place at 2.30 p.m. for the necessary action to be taken to remove a Member from the meeting)

A66 DELEGATED POWERS MEETINGS

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings Cabinet Members as listed below be adopted:-

- Safeguarding and Developing Learning Opportunities for Children – Pages 53D to 59D (Section D)
- Community Development, Equality and Young Peoples Issues – Pages 14E to 16E (Section E)
- Culture, Lifestyle, Sport and Tourism – Pages 31F to 32F (Section F)
- Regeneration and Environment – Pages 51G to 59G (Section G)
- Adult Independence Health and Well Being – Pages 40H to 49H (Section H)
- Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods – Pages 45J to 51J (Section J)
- Resources and Commissioning – Pages 24K to 32K (Section K)
- Town Centres – Pages 15L to 21L (Section L)
- Deputy Leader and Organisational Change and Governance – Pages 10N to 16N (Section N)

Mover :- Councillor Stone

Secunder :- Councillor Sharman

A67 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee (Section P) (pages 20P to 23P) be adopted.

Mover :- Councillor Sangster

Secunder : Councillor Kaye

A68 LICENSING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Board (Section Q) (pages 13Q to 15Q) be adopted.

Mover :- Councillor Wootton

Secunder :- Councillor Barron

A69 PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board (Section T) (pages 155T to 181T) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Pickering

Seconder:- Councillor Dodson

A70 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN

(1) Councillor Cutts asked what were the total inclusive breakdown costs of diversity in Rotherham?

Councillor Hussain was unclear as to what Councillor Cutts was asking for and so suggested that he provide further information so an answer could be provided.

However, he did point out that all of the Council's budget was spent on diversity as the Council aimed to meet the needs of all of Rotherham's community which comprised many groups and individuals.

Question 2 was not answered as the Member was not present.

(3) Councillor Fenoughty referred to the BBC "Inside Out" report which showed that the national average of town centre shop vacancies was 14% when in Rotherham it was 28% and one of the worst in the whole country. He asked what were the Cabinet Member's feelings on this?

Councillor R. S. Russell considered the figures suggested to be somewhat flawed, but reported that the Council had invested significantly in Rotherham Town Centre, especially to encourage new retailers into the town centre, with investments including:-

- Funding for town centre vitality grants to encourage new businesses into town and to allow them to diversify.
- Smartening up empty shops - with artwork and vinyl displays.
- Free Saturday and free after 3.00 p.m. parking during 2010.

Thirty-eight new businesses have opened already this year, compared to fifteen for the whole of last year. Twenty-four businesses have closed, which still represented a net increase of fourteen new businesses. This compared favourably to most town centres in the current climate. A more recent survey that had been undertaken indicated that Rotherham was bucking the trend by encouraging new businesses into the town centre.

(4) Councillor Mannion referred to the Council being allowed to sell off assets, including land and property at a discount so asked what amount was allowed per annum, what monies have been lost to Rotherham through discounted sales allowed each year since 1990, how much so far this year and what was planned to be given away in future?

Councillor Smith reported the Council was permitted to sell assets at less than best consideration.

There was no set amount per annum as each asset sale was considered on a case by case basis and Members were advised on the market value of the asset to compare with the amount of the proposed discounted sale. In this way Members were able to make an informed decision.

Records of sales to Registered Social Landlords were not maintained and, therefore, that information was not available as requested.

The only two pieces of information of sales held for 2010 were:-

- One asset sale completed at less than best consideration - St Witholds Garage Site – Sold for £15,000 (Registered Social Landlord Sale). The open market value of this asset at the date of decision to sell was £85,000.
- The only other asset in the Capital Receipts list was the St Ann's Car Park land on which the Council had recently (8th November, 2010) granted a long term lease (40 years) to Chantry YMCA for the construction of the MyPlace building. This was at an initial nominal rental amount of £50 per annum. The open market value of the land at the date of the decision to grant the lease was £210,000.

(5) Councillor Parker pointed out that according to recent press reports the Council spent approximately £180,000 on wallpaper for the recent refurbishment of the Town Hall and asked could the Cabinet Member confirm the exact amount that was spent and the exact amount that was spent on wallpaper for the Mayor's and Mayoress' parlours.

Councillor Smith confirmed that the cost of the wallpapering for the project was approximately £154,000. The approximate wallpaper costs for the Mayor's Parlour and the Mayoress' Parlour were £1,100 and £725 respectively.

(6) Councillor Turner pointed out it had been suggested to his colleagues that due to uncertainties as to the strength of the foundation on Forge Island and consequent new cost dimensions, the Master Plan for the island and the town would not take place and asked if this information was correct and if so were we still to buy the island and then sell it ?

Councillor Smith was uncertain as to what information Councillor Turner had on the foundations on Forge Island. At present officers were working with solicitors to finalise and hopefully close the deal with TCN for the sale of the Civic Site. As part of this agreement the Council would have an option to purchase Forge Island, which in turn kept the option open for a new Cultural Centre.

(7) Councillor Cutts referred to a thirty year old mother with two children working as a labourer in the fields who defended her beliefs as a Christian, then was accused of “blasphemy” and sentenced to death. He asked why this Council could not support “RELEASE” and send a letter of support to the Pakistani Ambassador?

Councillor Hussain confirmed that he, and other Councillors, received an email from Councillor Cutts about the situation. Councillor Akhtar had forwarded a letter to the High Commissioner of Pakistan and Councillor Ali had asked the Pakistan Secretary to the High Commissioner in London to pardon the lady in question.

Councillor Hussain pointed out that he had acknowledged Councillor Cutts’ email, but would deal with it on his return from holiday. A letter of support had now been sent along with one from the Leader.

Questions 8 to 14 remained unanswered after the thirty minute guillotine and the answers would be provided for all Members in writing.

[THE MAYOR AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN ORDER TO PROCESS THE MATTER REFERRED TO]

A71 POLICE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Moved by Councillor Littleboy and seconded by Councillor Akhtar:-

“This Council expresses its concern in respect of the Government’s proposals to replace the current Police governance arrangements with a single Police and Crime Commissioner for the whole of South Yorkshire.

At a time when the South Yorkshire Police service is likely to be losing over 1,000 police officers and staff; spending an estimated £100m nationally on this untried experiment is surely not a priority.

When local policing faces the most difficult financial reductions in its history, changing the body who manages those finances half way through those reductions clearly compounds the risk involved.

There are further concerns about the new proposals undermining local partnerships, politicising and most likely eliminating a Rotherham resident voice on the authority, this Council resolves to write to the Government and our local MPs urging that this proposal be reconsidered.”

The motion was put and carried and adopted by the Council.