

**COUNCIL MEETING  
2nd February, 2011**

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor McNeely) (in the Chair); Councillors Akhtar, Ali, Atkin, Barron, Blair, Buckley, Burton, Currie, Cutts, Dodson, Doyle, Falvey, Fenoughty, Ellis, Gamble, Gilding, Gosling, J. Hamilton, N. Hamilton, Havenhand, Hughes, Hussain, Jack, Johnston, Kaye, Kirk, License, Nightingale, Parker, Pickering, Rushforth, G. A. Russell, P. A. Russell, R. S. Russell, St. John, Sangster, Sharman, Sims, Slade, Smith, Steele, Stone, Swift, Thirlwall, Turner, Tweed, Walker, Whelbourn, Whysall, Wootton, S. Wright and Wyatt.

**A72 PRESENTATION OF AWARD**

The Mayor was pleased to present the Town Hall Catering Team with their certificate for achieving 5 Stars for Excellent Hygiene Standards.

Congratulations were offered to the Town Hall Catering Team for their success.

The Mayor was also pleased to report that Dean Winstanley from Swinton had reached the final of the Darts Championships at Lakeside.

Congratulations were offered to Dean on his achievement.

**A73 COUNCIL MINUTES**

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Sharman

**A74 COMMUNICATIONS**

(1) The Chief Executive submitted a petition from ninety-three residents of Brinsworth objecting to the proposed skate park on the Millennium Park at Brinsworth, which had been referred to the appropriate Directorate for consideration.

(2) The Chief Executive submitted apologies for absence from Councillors Austen, Donaldson, Goulty, Hodgkiss, Lakin, Littleboy, Mannion, Middleton and Sharp.

(Councillor Buckley declared a personal interest in the petition being a member of Brinsworth Parish Council)

**A75 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**A76 STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee (Section B) (pages 14B to 18B) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Buckley

Seconder:- Councillor Gilding

**A77 CABINET MINUTES**

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet (Section C) (pages 88C to 114C) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Sharman

(All Members of the Council present declared a personal interest in Minute No. C149 (Housing Rent Increase ) on the basis of either being a Council tenant or related to or associated with a Council tenant)

**A78 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 60D to 68D (Section D)
- Community Development, Equality and Young Peoples Issues – Pages 17E to 32E (Section E)
- Culture, Lifestyle, Sport and Tourism – Pages 33F to 36F (Section F)
- Regeneration and Environment – Pages 60G to 75G (Section G)
- Adult Independence Health and Well Being – Pages 50H to 56H (Section H)
- Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods – Pages 52J to 63J (Section J)
- Resources and Commissioning – Pages 33K to 35K (Section K)
- Town Centres – Pages 22L to 26L (Section L)

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Sharman

**A79 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee (Section P) (pages 24P to 33P) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Sangster

Seconder: Councillor Kaye

**A80 LICENSING BOARD**

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Board (Section Q) (pages 16Q to 19Q) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Wootton

Seconder:- Councillor Barron

**A81 PLANNING BOARD**

Resolved:- That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board (Section T) (pages 182T to 222T) be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Pickering

Seconder:- Councillor Dodson

**A82 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN**

(1) Councillor Thirlwall referred to the Cabinet meeting held on 8th September, 2010 where it was resolved to adopt an interim housing target of 750 new dwellings per annum, which would ultimately result in building some dwellings in the Green Belt and asked could Councillor Sharman say how he voted on this resolution?

Councillor Sharman reported that he chaired the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8th September, 2010 and the meeting approved the report without the necessity for a vote by individuals.

(2) Councillor Cutts asked what were the total inclusive breakdown costs of the Equality and Diversity Unit in Rotherham?

Councillor Hussain confirmed that the total costs of the Equalities and Diversity Unit, to the end of December, 2010 were £119,000 on salaries and £4,000 on non pay expenditure. Therefore, the total net expenditure to the end of December, 2010, when the unit disbanded as part of the Policy and Performance Review was £123,000.

(3) Councillor Gilding asked which schools in Rotherham were in "Special Measures"?

The Leader reported that the schools in Special Measures were:-

- Broom Valley Community Primary.
- Ferham Primary.
- Maltby Redwood Junior and Infant.
- Meadow View Primary.
- Thurcroft Junior.
- No Secondary or Special schools were in a category.

(4) Councillor Parker asked could the Cabinet Member confirm whether he considered filling potholes and tamping down with the back of a shovel good practice and safe and did it make good economic sense to have to keep going over this process?

Councillor Smith confirmed the Council had a duty to maintain the highway in a safe condition and this meant that temporary repairs to defects (potholes) often had to be made rather than completing a permanent reinstatement. The response time for potentially hazardous defects was 4 hours and 24 hours for those which were less dangerous, but still met the criteria for repair (e.g. >40mm deep on the highway).

The number of pothole defects reported in the four week period from 4th to 25th January, 2011 was over 4,900, a 34% increase in the same time last year which in turn was the most severe winter for 30 years, so the Council deployed additional resources just to meet its statutory duty to keep the highway safe. While it was far better to do a permanent reinstatement, this was not an option for dealing with many of the reported defects during this period.

A large number of these potholes were in traffic sensitive locations, i.e. on busy, main roads where it was not always practical to stop traffic in order to make repairs. Staff were, therefore, often required to make the repair in "live" traffic. The correct method of repair was, however, to apply compaction and the method described did not achieve an acceptable standard. If this practice had been observed, staff would be reminded of the correct method of completing these temporary repairs to ensure they were carried out as they should be.

(5) The question from Councillor Mannion fell as he was not present.

(6) Councillor Turner asked why was it still necessary to hold Council meetings?

The Leader confirmed the Council were obliged by law to hold an Annual meeting and empowered in every year to hold such other meetings as they may determine. Under Standing Orders, Council meetings were held at approximately six week intervals.

There were various functions, such as adopting the budget and the policy framework, which were reserved to the full Council, as set out in the Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation.

(7) Councillor Thirlwall asked in view of the dire financial situation that the Council predictably finds itself in did the Leader believe that now was the time to scrap the ridiculous and unnecessary Imagination Library?

The Leader disagreed with Councillor Thirlwall and reported that more than half of children starting nursery school in socially deprived areas of England have delayed language. Rotherham ranked 305th out of 354 districts in England (within the lowest 14%) in the index of 'child well-being' suggesting many Rotherham children were disadvantaged from the outset. The Imagination Library was, therefore, introduced to give children in the borough a better start in life. The scheme 'gifts' books to children under-five and encouraged parental involvement in the development of their child's communication and language skills. A language-rich home helped a child to develop in many ways and story-telling and book-reading were an easy way to have regular, additional talking time. As 75% of brain development occurred in the early years (0 - 5 years) the importance of early stimuli was essential.

Rotherham's Imagination Library currently gifted books to 12,300 children each month - 79% of the under-five population in Rotherham (November, 2010). Assuming the child registered at birth they would receive approximately 60 books over a five year period. A total of 16,124 children have registered with the programme since its launch in 2007, demonstrating the value that Rotherham parents and carers attach to the scheme.

Early intervention to prevent language and communication difficulties could significantly reduce the long-term cost to individuals, families and the local community. Without solid foundations in communication skills children ran the risk of low attainment, low self-esteem, poor social skills, behaviour problems and even criminal activity. These could all impact upon an individual's relationships, educational attainment and employment opportunities. The resulting cost to the nation to address these issues was the provision of life-long services (i.e. special education programmes, NEET programmes, additional health services, benefits etc.).

(The Leader declared a personal interest in this question on the basis that he was on the Board of the U.K. Imagination Library)

(8) Councillor Cutts asked did the Council consider that having Christmas in July may offend Christian believers and what was the cost of artificial snow in All Saints Square?

Councillor R. S. Russell indicated that Councillor Cutts had previously received a written response to the question of Christmas in July from Councillor Hussain. There had been a mixed response from some people of the Christian faith who were offended and wrote to the Advertiser. However, those who supported the event (the local business community - some of whom would also be Christian) were not. Indeed their letters of response to the Advertiser made it clear that they did not mean to offend anyone, but were trying to encourage more people into the Town Centre through this initiative.

(9) Councillor Gilding asked what was the estimated extra income that would be generated by the review of rents of premises jointly occupied by the Council and South Yorkshire Police?

Councillor Smith reported that the intention of the report that went to Cabinet on 1st December, 2010 was to put what historically have been informal arrangements for the occupation of property onto a formal agreement between the Council and South Yorkshire Police.

An increase in rents received by the Council may be a consequence of this exercise. Equally, the rents paid by the Council to South Yorkshire Police for use of their property may increase. Therefore, rental level changes could not be given at this time.

(10) Councillor Parker asked did the Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods believe that a nearly 9% increase on Council house rents which far exceeds inflation was fair?

Councillor Akhtar explained that the Government wished to see Local Authority rents fall in line with other Registered Social Landlords. The Government required Local Authorities to work to a rent they prescribed known as the Formula Rent. The Formula Rent took into account inflation and the Government expectation of rent convergence.

This year using the Government's prescribed formula in order to achieve convergence by 2015/16 Rotherham was expected to increase its rents by 8.69%. In setting rents at this level, the Council had followed the guidance of Government. To not do so would result in a significant detriment to the Council and the people of Rotherham. For every 1 % that rents fell below this level whilst it would make 48p per week difference to each householder, it would also result in an annual loss in excess of £500,000 to the Council.

Last year the Government gave Local Authorities some flexibility to dampen down potential rent increases because of the difficult economic climate. This year no such flexibility had been granted by the Government leaving the Council with no choice but to raise rents in line with the formula or suffer disproportionate penalties.

[11] The question from Councillor Mannion fell as he was not present.

[12] Councillor Turner asked was it still the intention to proceed with Forge Island and indeed the master plan of the past ten years for the renaissance?

Councillor Smith explained that the vision of Forge Island as a cultural centre remained and the deal with TCN allowed the Council an option to purchase Forge Island until 2015. The Renaissance Masterplan was adopted in February, 2005 and many of the projects have been delivered or are being delivered, such as:-

- Moorgate Crofts office building and campus.
- Railway Station re development (on site).
- Free bee bus linking the town centre to Parkgate.
- Phase one of the flood alleviation scheme completed.
- Re-furbishment of buildings on the High Street (such as Hamby's) using Townscape Heritage funding.
- Westgate Demonstrator Project (practically all apartments were let and the ground floor of Imperial buildings was approaching full occupancy).
- Minster yard lighting scheme completed and Minster yard public realm due for completion in April.
- Civic offices due for completion in September.
- Introduced shop local campaign, with over 10,000 people signed up and over 100 businesses.
- 43 new businesses opened in 2010.
- MyPlace young people's facility on site now.
- Phased re-development of the college campus, on site now.
- Community stadium due to start on site this summer.

Questions 13 to 16 remained unanswered after the thirty minute guillotine and the answers would be provided for all Members in writing.

**A83 QUESTIONS TO SPOKESPERSONS**

(1) Councillor Thirlwall asked in view of the financial situation that the Police found themselves in, did the Police Spokesperson believe that the Police would be better employed fighting crime than illegally ejecting a democratically elected representative of the people from the Town Hall?

Councillor S. Wright reported the Police Service had a statutory duty to maintain and protect public order as well as fighting and preventing crime.

(2) Councillor Gilding asked why was there a planned reduction in Police manpower when the Police Authority had built up a "War Chest" over the last few years?

Councillor S. Wright reported the Police Authority had managed to strengthen its financial position over the last few years by channeling any annual underspends into reserves. The Authority was now seeing the benefits of this strategy, as it was in a position to use its reserves to phase in the required reductions and to provide up front funding for the severance scheme which would generate permanent long term budget savings.

**A84 APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL MEMBER TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Councillor Stone referred to the request to fill a vacant post for a Parish Council Member on the Council's Standards Committee.

Resolved:- That Parish Councillor David Rowley of Ravenfield Parish Council be appointed as a Parish Council representative on the Standards Committee and Parish Councillor Peter Blanksby of Wales Parish Council be appointed as a reserve member.

Mover:- Councillor Stone

Seconder:- Councillor Sharman

**A85 SCRUTINY UPDATE**

Councillor Whelbourn, Chairman of the Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee, welcomed the opportunity to update activities by Scrutiny over the past few months, which included consideration of:-

- The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill.
- Scrutiny of Crime and Reduction Partnerships.
- Councillor Call for Action.
- Localism Bill.
- Public Health Consultation Paper.

The Scrutiny Panels had also considered work relating to:-

- PE and Sport in Schools.
- Economic Development through Business Centres and the Advanced Manufacturing Park.
- Operation of the housing sector.
- Response of Council Services to the adverse weather.
- Future role of Scrutiny.

Resolved:- That the update on the work of Scrutiny be noted.

**A86****BEST WISHES**

On behalf of the Council the Mayor offered her best wishes for a speedy recovery both to Councillor Littleboy and to Fred Edwards (Mayor's Chauffeur), who was currently in hospital.