

**COUNCIL MEETING  
11th November, 2020**

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

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

**399. TWO MINUTES SILENCE OF REMEMBRANCE**

The Mayor lead the meeting to observe two minutes silence marking the end of World War One and to remember those who sadly lost their lives.

**400. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor was pleased to present her activity since the last Council meeting which was attached for information to the Mayor's Letter, but drew particular attention to the national lockdown from 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2020.

Since the last Council Meeting the Mayor had also been involved in the Remembrance Sunday pre-recorded event online, the lay of a wreath in Clifton Park and paid tribute to the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice. In doing so she also offered her thanks to a number of people involved in the process.

The Mayor also attended Dalton Parish Council's very small socially distanced outdoor event to lay a wreath.

The Mayor would also only be taking part in a very limited number of engagements/events for the remainder of this year:-

Christmas Lights Switch On - 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2020.

Virtual Reclaim the Night Event - 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2020

Big Hearts, Big Changes Virtual Event - 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2020

**401. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alam, Julie Turner, Tweed, Whysall and Yasseen.

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### 402. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications received.

### 403. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

**Resolved:-** That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

### 404. PETITIONS

No petitions have been received since the previous Council Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020.

### 405. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

### 406. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**(1) Mr. Liam Harron** referred to the minutes of the Council meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 where the Leader stated:-

*“the Council would take action based on the outcome of that review”* - a review by the Information Commissioner

On 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2020 the Information Commissioner totally dismissed RMBC's allegations that his request for information about “evidenced dishonesty” was vexatious, so asked was the Leader prepared to debate this matter in public?

The Leader explained the Council rejected an FOI request from Mr. Harron because it believed it to be vexatious. Mr. Harron requested that this decision be reviewed by the ICO.

Mr. Harron seemed to be implying that there was evidence of dishonesty and that this notion was supported by the ICO. This is simply not the case.

The ICO were saying the Council could not apply Section 14(1) to the request (i.e. vexatious) and the Council were, therefore, to review its response. This was very different to the ICO implying or supporting that there was and/or was evidence of alleged dishonesty.

Whilst the Council still believed it to be vexatious, the ICO did not believe the request was vexatious and hence requested the Council answer the request which it had done.

The Council had now fully complied with the ICO's findings and answered the FOI request.

On 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 the ICO contacted the Council to confirm the case was closed. Therefore, the Council had complied with the Decision Notice and also considered this matter closed.

The Leader explained he had not seen any evidence of what Mr. Harron described, but suggested if wanted to bring that forward to write to the Leader and raise, he would be happy to give it his due consideration.

In a supplementary question Mr. Harron indicated he had sent the Leader evidence three plus years ago. He had referred to this at the last meeting and raised a similar matter at the last Cabinet meeting where he was advised to make a complaint.

Mr. Harron described how he had attempted to make a complaint and had received correspondence from the Complaints Manager dated 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2019 where he refused to look at a very specific complaint and the reason he gave was information was to be reviewed. He had heard nothing since. He found it very confusing how to lodge a complaint and asked would this now be looked at and progressed.

The Leader was aware Mr. Harron had engaged in lots of correspondence and it was believed to be inappropriate in this meeting to speak about individual officers of the Council. He suggested Mr. Harron resubmit his complaint and copy himself in and if he was still dissatisfied the Local Government Ombudsman would adjudicate. This was the process Mr. Harron should follow.

**(2) Mr. Thirlwall** referred to the last Council Meeting where he raised the issue of Councillors B. Cutts, John Turner and Reeder's continued failure to properly complete their Register of Interests.

He asked could the Chair of the Standards and Ethics Committee please tell him what actions she had taken to remedy this matter?

Councillor McNeely, Chair of the Standards and Ethics Committee, confirmed the Monitoring Officer and her staff had liaised with the relevant Members and their party, to ensure that the Members' Register of Interest forms were up-to-date and appropriately completed.

All of the Register of Interest forms of the Members referred to now included membership of the Rotherham Democratic Party.

In a supplementary question Mr. Thirlwall expressed his surprise it was done given the amount of times it had not been completed.

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He had been told that all Members of the Brexit Party emailed in to change their registration from the Brexit Party to Rotherham Democratic Party. He had spoken to the Chief Executive about the audit trail and emails in place and was waiting for a third tier tribunal to see if he could access. He failed to see why the change from the Brexit Party to the Democratic Party had not been done if all Members already emailed in last year. Even following on from his question at the last Council Meeting in September the three said Councillors had not updated their Registers for over a week, and Councillor Reeder had not updated hers for a further month. He asked for an explanation why this was not done immediately.

Councillor McNeely described the difficulties some may be facing with working at home with differing internet speeds. She was satisfied the Registers were now complete and this had been chased by the Leader of the Opposition.

**(3) Elizabeth** asked how many cases of CSE had RMBC dealt with in each of the years since the Jay report and for the answer to be broken down into cases arising from the Jay Report and cases not arising from the Jay report.

The Leader confirmed the use of the Working Together (2018) definition of CSE:-

1. *“Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing and/or another or others performing sexual activities.*

He explained what could be recorded with the number of children who were supported by Social Care or Early Help Services and where any risk at all of Child Sexual Exploitation was recorded within their file. It was made clear that this did not suggest that each child had been a victim of sexual abuse, but that their vulnerability to it had been identified.

For each of the years referenced, the number of children identified as such were:-

Year	No. of New Cases
2014	3
2015	123
2016	93
2017	126
2018	117
2019	68
2020	106
<b>Total</b>	<b>636</b>

Since the Council introduced its current risk assessment profile in 2016, about half of the cases mentioned have been identified as being “low risk”, with 16% being seen as the highest risk. At the lowest end of the scale, the assessment suggested that the appropriate support and mitigation was in place to prevent harm from occurring, whereas at the top of the scale professionals would be seeking to take urgent action to prevent imminent harm.

Ofsted have conducted a focused visit to Children’s Services in the last few weeks, and in their (verbal) feedback inspectors commented that Rotherham managed risk effectively, having met with staff from Evolve as well as looking at these risk assessments.

The overwhelming majority of the children referred to would not have featured in the Jay Report, most of these were adults when the report was produced.

Rotherham’s Post-Abuse Support Services between July 2016 and September 2020 supported **971** individual survivors of CSE, many of whom would have suffered their abuse during the period covered by Professor Jay’s report.

The Leader was happy to provide the numbers in detail in writing.

In a supplementary question Elizabeth asked given the uncertain times, what had been done to prevent or intervene in CSE cases throughout the pandemic.

The Leader explained the threat of child abuse and the need to prevent continued through the current circumstances. Social Workers were in direct contact and supportive work was taking place to prevent crimes. In addition, regular intelligence and Police operations remained ongoing. So as much work was being done and this would continue. If there were any particular concerns he was happy to pick this up outside of the meeting.

**(4) Mr. Felstead** asked could the Cabinet Member justify the business case for the Willmott Dixon Housing schemes please numbers and financial performance?

Councillor Beck, Cabinet Member for Housing, explained the Masterplan for Rotherham Town Centre set out a vision for making the town centre a great place to live, work and visit, and clearly articulated the need for more homes. As well as the major investment into Forge Island and other regeneration projects, the Council was leading the way with town centre housing development, and in 2017, Cabinet resolved to build homes on three key sites within its ownership.

Willmott Dixon was procured as the Council's construction partner, and work was now well underway to build 171 houses and apartments on the Sheffield Road car park, Millfold House (now demolished) and the former Henley's garage on Wellgate. These sites sat at strategically important, highly visible gateway locations in the town centre, adjacent to other sites with the potential to accommodate further housing development. The delivery of new homes across these sites would promote investor confidence in further residential town centre development and provide a significant contribution towards Rotherham's wider housing growth requirement. It was also important to maximise the scheme's contribution towards meeting the Borough's affordable housing need, with many other sites within the town centre presenting viability challenges. The provision of 72% affordable housing on this scheme would have a significant impact

The nature of these ex-industrial, brownfield sites posed significant viability challenges, something the private sector were unwilling to take on due to development risks and no return on their investment. It was, therefore, important for the Council to step in and utilise public sector investment in the early stages of delivering the Town Centre Masterplan.

Value for money assessments were undertaken which the Council did in conjunction with many experts putting the scheme together and validated by Sheffield City Region and Homes England. It was important to remember the Council had not done this scheme in the town centre to make a profit, but to make a long term investment into the regeneration of the town and wider benefits. More people were living in the town centre and spending money. One part of the Town Centre Masterplan that was externally validated and assessed was for the building of 171 new homes with the contractor now on site.

In a supplementary question Mr. Felstead pointed out the 171 homes had since risen to 177 homes as more land had been purchased.

He asked why was the Council losing £20 million with nothing architectural pleasing with back-to-back housing and spending potentially inflated prices per apartment. He acknowledged the need to build housing, but at what cost.

Last year three blocks of Council housing for 215 units were being sold for £75,000 yet the Council was spending £250,000. With the £20 million being overspent the Council could have built more in the town centre or built a shopping centre. He, therefore, asked what procurement route had the Council gone down and what contract was Wilmott Dixon on.

Councillor Beck explained it was not possible to compare one project against another, particularly on the scale being spoke of here. The Council had to acquire additional land to deliver on the units. The levels on the site meant the development was not all flats, but a good proportion were actually houses. The contract had gone through a robust exercise to deliver these new homes and this would ensure they would have a lasting impact and vibrancy on the town centre.

**407. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved:-** That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, that should the Mayor deem it necessary the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that any items involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**408. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT**

The Leader described today as a sombre day.

Not only was the contribution of our service men and women in two world wars and other conflicts being remembered, but the country was also back in national lockdown whilst the fight to get Coronavirus back under control was continuing.

Tribute was made to the Mayor and the Civic Office and all those who were involved in the making of such a beautiful film to mark Remembrance Day at the weekend. It was, of course, deeply regrettable that the occasion could not be marked in the usual way, but it was a fitting online tribute observed by many hundreds of people.

Referring to the National Lockdown, as of Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> November all areas across England were again subject to new tighter restrictions. These restrictions would remain in place until Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December when they would then be reviewed.

In the last week (to Sunday 8th November) there had been a further 1,166 positive cases in Rotherham, the fourth highest weekly increase across South Yorkshire.

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Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust had seen 28 COVID-19 deaths in the last week, an increase of +23. This brought the total number of deaths registered from COVID-19 in the Borough period to 382. As of 3<sup>rd</sup> November the 7-day infection rate was 505.3 per 100,000.

There were 122 hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients which was a slight reduction on the week before. Two patients were requiring mechanical ventilation.

There were some signs that the corner was beginning to turn. There had been four or five days now where the number of new infections had fallen. The number of inpatients in the hospital was lower than it was about 10 days ago and because of the progress made in treating the disease, the number of patients requiring mechanical ventilation was lower than would have been expected during the first wave.

For some Members of this Council, those infections and illnesses may have touched you and your families directly and thoughts and prayers today were with all those and others similarly affected.

Further, the Community Hub and Rotherham Heroes continued to provide support for the most vulnerable residents.

In terms of the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable; unlike the first Lockdown, people over 60 were not being advised to shield. Instead, the Government was writing to people who were Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV). For those that received this letter and needed support they should be asked to contact the Hub and register. Rotherham Community Hub and the Rotherham Heroes Volunteers could help.

It was noted that as of 10<sup>th</sup> November the Hub had received 196 new Registrations from people identified as CEV with 64 having requested support.

Drawing attention to Business Support, the Government had extended the Furlough Scheme at 80% until the end of March, 2021. All businesses with a rateable value would be eligible to apply for the Government Business Support Grant. The Tier 3 element was currently available to apply for on the website and since lockdown this would be available soon.

Across South Yorkshire and locally the Council's Discretionary Business Support funding would be made available to continue support to smaller businesses and self-employed. The application process for the national scheme would be available through the Council's website shortly.

In drawing to a close please continue to be careful, stay safe, and look after each other.



Councillor Carter referred to the Government announcement earlier in the week and asked if the Council had applied for the testing scheme referred to. It they had who had the request gone to and if not then for what reasons had the Council not applied.

The Leader confirmed he would come back to Councillor Carter on the specifics of his question, but confirmed the Council had expressed its willingness to take part in the national scheme and Rotherham was not chosen by Government to be part of the pilot scheme. He would respond to Councillor Carter after the meeting.

**409. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS**

**Resolved:-** That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21<sup>st</sup> September and 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2020, be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

**410. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - LIBRARY STRATEGY 2021-2026**

Further to Minute No. 63 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 consideration was given to the report which set out in detail the vision and framework contained in the Library Strategy 2021–2026 and how the Strategy and new service offer would enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duty under the Public Library Act and meet the needs of the community through the delivery of the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service.

The Strategy and service offer had been finalised following feedback from the last phase of consultation, along with the Equalities Impact Analysis. All future delivery changes would, therefore, be underpinned by the Strategy. Particular attention was drawn to the exciting proposals to reopen the refurbished library at Kimberworth, relocate the Thurcroft Library to Gordon Bennett, the increased community partnership work with the new Brinsworth Library collaboration with the Parish Council working on some new models of management and access and the need for libraries to diversify.

Particular reference was made to the refurbished, relocated and newly opened libraries in the Borough, the action plans and Equality Impact Assessments and how the report reflected the thorough process this Strategy had followed. This report had already been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Cabinet and was now presented for approval by full Council.

Members welcomed this vibrant Strategy and some raised particular comments about the constraints of the Dinnington Library, why Aston Library was duly named when it was in Swallownest, the enhancements

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and relocation of Thurcroft Library and the success of the partnership approach to Brinsworth Library.

Whilst the majority of libraries were easily reached by communities, concern was expressed that some disadvantaged communities did not have a wonderful library to talk about which was disappointing for some.

The importance of volunteers and the work they did in supporting libraries was also emphasised.

Councillor Carter, however, expressed his concern about the transfer of Brinsworth Library and was of the view that the use of volunteers was the first step to removing professional operational staff and could lead to a reduction in usage. He provided an example of what had happened in Tinsley over the border in Sheffield. He saw no reason to invest in a new town centre library and believed the Council had failed in its relocation of the library to Riverside House. He believed it a waste of money and believed this was why the budgets could not be balanced over many years.

Councillor Steele expressed his surprise at Councillor Carter's comments given the distinct lack of interest in the scrutiny process where he would have found in-depth knowledge had he attended the many meetings and sub-groups. He was happy to support the Library Strategy and valued Councillor Allen's passion, commitment and protection to delivering libraries where others had slashed theirs.

This was echoed by Councillors Cusworth, Jepson, Read and Reeder, who welcomed the changes, the enthusiasm exhibited by staff, the resources and how the public could access these facilities during these economically difficult times. Councillor Carter's lack of support was noted and comments corrected as the library in Rotherham was temporarily relocated to Riverside in 2010 as the Government scrapped the Regional Development Agencies. Rotherham's libraries would continue to be staffed by professional staff and with the support of Future High Streets funding, would once again be relocated to the middle of Rotherham.

Councillor Allen in her right to reply highlighted the amount of work that had gone into the review and the Strategy and wished to place on record her own thanks to officers in Culture, Sport and Tourism and to Zoe Oxley who had worked tirelessly throughout. She went onto to address the comments made by Members, especially Councillor Carter of how Rotherham was enshrining the principle and investing in its communities. She welcomed the successes, especially in Kiveton with the Youth Service and would be more than happy to discuss this further.

It was also pointed out that many of Rotherham's vulnerable residents could access the Home Library Service and 98% lived within 2 miles of a library building. She was unable to answer why Aston Library was named as such, but would endeavour to find out. In terms of the library in

Dinnington Resource Centre and the constraints within the building with the relocation of the post office, Councillor Allen was happy to discuss issues further with the trustees how best the facilities could work together.

**Resolved:-** That the final version of the Library Strategy 2021-2026 and associated service offer be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Allen

Seconder:- Councillor Lelliott

**411. MEMBERSHIP OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL, POLITICAL BALANCE AND ENTITLEMENT TO SEATS AND MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PANELS**

Consideration was given to the report which detailed how the Proper Officer was required to notify the Council of any change in the political balance of the Authority or the operation of new political groups under the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

Since the last Council meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020, the Proper Officer had received notification of changes to political affiliation.

With effect from 28<sup>th</sup> September, Councillor Ian Jones confirmed his resignation from the Labour Party and intention to sit as a non-aligned Councillor.

With effect from 19<sup>th</sup> October, Councillor Kerry Albiston confirmed her resignation from the Labour Party and intention to sit as a non-aligned Councillor.

There were now 7 non-aligned Members, who were not in a political group. There were also 2 political groups in operation on the Council, the Labour Group (42 Councillors) and the Rotherham Democratic Party Group (11 Councillors).

In addition, there were 3 Councillor vacancies which could not currently be filled due to restrictions on the convening of by-elections (Coronavirus Regulations 2020).

With the 149 seats available on Committees, Boards and Panels and under the calculation the Labour Group was entitled to 104 seats and the Rotherham Democratic Party Group entitled to 27. This left 18 seats which could not be given to Members of the political groups and should be allocated to the 7 non-aligned Councillors.

**Resolved:-** (1) That the revised political composition of the Council be noted:-

(a) Labour Group – 42 seats

(b) Rotherham Democratic Party Group – 11 seats

(c) Non-aligned – 7 seats

(2) That the entitlement of the membership of the political groups and non-aligned Members and such entitlements be reflected in Council's appointments of Members to Committees be approved.

(3) That, subject to the changes required from the previous Municipal Year's entitlement, the appointments made by the Council in the 2019/20 Municipal Year to Committees, Boards and Panels and Joint Committees be continued for the 2020/21 Municipal Year along with the following changes to appointments:-

**Licensing Board**

Councillor Ian Jones to fill a non-aligned vacancy

**Licensing Committee**

Councillor Ian Jones to fill a non-aligned vacancy

**Planning Board**

Councillor Amy Rushforth to fill a Labour vacancy

**Overview and Scrutiny – Improving Places Select Commission**

Councillor Ian Jones to fill a non-aligned vacancy  
Councillor Amy Brookes to fill a Labour vacancy

**Overview and Scrutiny – Improving Health Select Commission**

Councillor Kerry Albiston to take a non-aligned vacancy

**412. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for amendments to various parts of the Council's Constitution following a periodic review by the Constitution Working Group.

The proposals set out in detail within this report have been reviewed and were supported by the Group, made up of cross-party Members with the amendments taking immediate effect and included changes to:-

- The Chief Executive's Sub-Scheme of Delegation.
- Policy Framework Documents.
- Council Procedure Rule 11 (Members' Questions to Outside Bodies).
- Council Procedure Rule 12 (Public Questions).
- Scheme of Petitions.
- Responsibility of Functions.

Councillor Carter wished to place on record his opposition to these changes. He believed the public were being let down and failed to see how the Council had changed given the further restrictions; with those in charge waiting to return to type with the making of decisions behind closed doors.

He believed it to be unacceptable and which was why 6 Labour Councillors had left the ruling group and showed how weak the leadership was.

Councillor Steele pointed out all these elements had been subject to a full discussion and not all those involved with in agreement. However, he praised the Council how quick it had reacted to the pandemic to get its meetings back up and running, a reflection on how open and transparent it was.

Councillor Cusworth pointed out that Councillor Carter merely made assertions and failed to challenge the robustness of such decisions as he failed to attend any meetings.

This was echoed by the Leader and believed the comments made did not bear any relation to fact or reality. Member decision making was collective once a month and records of those meetings were easily accessible.

**Resolved:-** (1) That the scheme of delegation be amended to allow for the implementation of an emergency delegation for the discharge of non-executive functions to the Chief Executive, to progress decisions related to COVID-19 recovery, subject to statutory decision making safeguards.

(2) That the list of the various Policy Framework documents referenced within the Constitution be updated.

(3) That amendments be made to Council Procedure Rule 11 (which deals with Member questions).

(4) That amendments be made to Council Procedure Rule 12 (which deals with public questions).

(5) That amendments be made to the Scheme of Petitions.

(6) That changes be made to the Responsibility of Functions (Appendix 9 of the Constitution):-

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- a. That quorum figures for each committee individually be referenced (rather than stating one third of the membership).
- b. That the recommended amendments by the Health and Wellbeing Board be endorsed.
- c. That the size of Licensing Committee Hearing Panels be confirmed as five Members with a quoracy of three Members.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

### 413. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, introduced a further update for 2020/21 on the latest work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Select Commissions - Health, Improving Lives and Improving Places as set out in detail as part of the report.

Scrutiny was effective in Rotherham and as part of the pre-scrutiny process recommendations or additional points were made for consideration by the Cabinet.

The report set out details of the additional work undertaken and the sub-groups projects. All Scrutiny Members, including the Opposition, were thanked for their input and in the getting of the best recommendations for scrutiny. Invitations had been extended numerous times to Councillor Carter to attend meetings as this would be where he would find the answers to his questions.

Councillor Jepson echoed the comments and in particular the invitations to Councillor Carter and where he could, in fact, have a voice for the constituents he represented.

Councillor Carter did not believe Rotherham demonstrated true scrutiny nor an open democratic process as he believed it should be chaired by an Opposition Councillor.

Councillor Cusworth and Napper disagreed with Councillor Carter. If he attended Councillor Carter would realise the wealth and breadth of cross-party involvement that scrutiny brought to Rotherham and 2 of the Vice-Chairs were from the Opposition Party.

Further Members were disappointed with Councillor Carter's view about Scrutiny and where, if he did attend meetings, would see that it served as an externally validated process which was fit for purpose. They urged Councillor Carter to represent the people who elected him and not hide behind a non-democratic process.

Councillor Buckley was saddened by his Ward Colleague's comments pointing out that Councillor Carter had the opportunity to become involved. It was such a pity for the people he represented that he failed to carry out the job he received an allowance for.

Councillor John Turner complimented the Chairs on their roles and this was endorsed by the Vice-Chairs.

Councillor Watson was keen to point out that Rotherham's scrutiny process was held in high regard and described how both he and Councillor Steele had attended an East Midlands meeting to talk about how scrutiny worked in Rotherham. This was endorsed by Councillor Walsh who took his scrutiny duties very seriously and was proud to be part of the process.

In his right to reply Councillor Steele was keen to be provided with proof by Councillor Carter when the Borough's scrutiny integrity was brought into question. Even the Commissioners were keen for Rotherham's scrutiny process to return when it was initially suspended, which was tribute to the dedication and commitment in the process. He had spoken at several conferences and even spoke in Sheffield about how the system worked. He believed Rotherham's scrutiny function was good and worked well.

**Resolved:-** That the report be received and the contents noted.

Mover:- Councillor Steele

Seconder:- Councillor Napper

#### **414. DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH APPOINTMENT**

Consideration was given to a report which provided formal notification of the Director of Public Health's appointment following a robust recruitment process leading to the appointment of Ben Anderson.

The employment start date of the new Director of Public Health would be 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2021.

The Council paid tribute to the former Director of Public Health, Terri Roche, for all her work her in Rotherham and wished her the best in her retirement.

Councillor Carter echoed the sentiments for Terri, but found it astounding that the Borough had gone all summer without a Director of Public Health in the middle of the pandemic. He, therefore, welcomed the appointment of Ben Anderson.

The Leader reiterated that Rotherham had had cover from Doncaster's Director of Public Health and he too welcomed Ben to Rotherham.

**Resolved:-** That the appointment of Ben Anderson as the Director of Public Health for Rotherham MBC be noted.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Roche

**415. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS**

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward updates for Wingfield, Anston and Woodsetts and Boston Castle 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 would be supported by the neighbourhood team and would work with officers and residents from a range of organisations to respond to residents.

Councillors Ireland and Jepson, on behalf of the Anston and Woodsetts Ward, gave an update on their Ward priorities as follows:-

- Clean and Green activity with Anston Park Junior and Anston Brook Schools to promote the environment, involvement in environment projects and the consequences of littering
- Speed watch events around various locations in Anston and Woodsetts in conjunction with South Yorkshire Police. From last year's budget a mobile vehicle activated speed unit had been purchased which enabled it to be moved around the Ward where there were known speeding hotspots
- Together with Woodsetts Parish, Council, 3 permanent speed signs had been funded and awaiting installation
- Community Chest had been successful again this year. Community groups had all suffered throughout the pandemic and had needed a lot of extra support
- A number of improvements within the Woodland Drive Community Centre including CCTV, new local play park and the installation of a defibrillator on the side of the Centre. Replacement defibrillator pads had been funded through the Community Leadership Fund
- There were 5 defibrillators within Anston. Thanks were conveyed to Start a Heart with whom work had taken place
- There was ongoing work with the Probation Service decorating the Community Centre. The facelift was part of a wider scheme to encourage more users into the Centre



- There were several woodlands in the area with a number of trees cut down for safety purposes. These had been made into bench seats/used for woodland activities and distributed to local schools for reading gardens
- Pumpkin trail where over 100 people had attended over the 3 days

Councillor McNeely, on behalf of the Boston Castle Ward, gave an update on its Ward priorities as follows:-

- Sincere thanks to all the volunteers, businesses, community groups and local residents who came together in various ways to help in the community
- Wellgate House – Ward Councillors had worked closely with South Yorkshire Police, Places for People, the Council and local residents to target anti-social behaviour around the property. As a result local residents now kept the Police and Councillors updated via a Whatsapp group
- Ward funding had been used to work in partnership with the local Mosque to look at the possibility of developing a hub for community activities
- Herringthorpe Playing Fields – in response to community concerns regarding anti-social behaviour and following a meeting between the Council and Police, fencing had been erected to prohibit access in certain areas to the field. Changes had also been made to the way the field was managed to improve its potential to attract wildlife
- Wharnccliffe Flats – South Yorkshire Police had made a significant number of arrests and numerous warrants executed. New CCTV had now been installed and with the support of RotherFed and local Councillors, a newsletter would be produced to keep residents up-to-date with ongoing work
- Boston Castle Grove – South Yorkshire Police had met with Thomas Rotherham College and a plan agreed to help further secure their site to restrict out of hours access in response to concerns raised by local residents regarding speeding and anti-social behaviour on and around the Grove. Patrols were continuing around the issues with numerous fines issued to illegally parked vehicles
- Start a Heart had agreed to refurbish the disused telephone box at the bottom of Boston Castle Grove and install a defibrillator
- Ward Councillors had been working with the Cabinet Members on the Town Centre Master Plan
- Groups were invited to bid into the Ward Budget and pitch to the public at a Dragons Den event. Residents and Councillors agreed to fund 5 projects: Canklow Rainbow Kids Club, Lighthouse Homes, Friends of Clifton Park, Canklow Kidz and Solo Dance Fitness

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- The Boston Castle Ward Budget has also funded other projects including United Multicultural Centre (UMCC), Sangeet Choir, Friends Indeed and Rotherham Hospice
- Congratulations must go to Castings Innovations who had secured a grant from the Mental Health Small Grants Scheme. They continued to work with existing service users remotely throughout Covid and had adapted their services to provide home crafting kits
- The Covid information stalls had continued at Rotherham College and Sprouts Supermarket but due to the current lockdown the November dates had been put on hold
- Thanks to SYP Officers, Steve, Matt and Dan, and Housing Team Shaun, Paul, Sophie, Emma and various residents across the Ward who kept in constant contact

Unfortunately, due to technological difficulties, the presentation by Wingfield Ward Members was deferred to the next meeting.

**Resolved:-** That the Ward updates be received and the contents noted.

Mover:- Councillor Watson

Seconder:- Councillor Read

### 416. 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 Clark

### 417. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover:- Councillor Wyatt

Seconder:- Councillor Walsh

### 418. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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

Mover:- Councillor Roche

Seconder:- Councillor Mallinder

### 419. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover:- Councillor Sheppard

Seconder:- Councillor Williams

**420. 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 Sub-Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Ellis

Seconder:- Councillor Beaumont

**421. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS**

There were no questions for the designated spokespersons.

**422. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS**

**(1) Councillor R. Elliott** asked the Leader of the Council “We anticipate the Government will not issue free school meal vouchers for the Christmas holiday. The Leader must confirm now that RMBC will ensure that children will be fed, or will he stand back again while a Cabinet Member promotes inequality across the Borough for children by making a unilateral decision on behalf of his Ward only?” In asking his question Councillor R. Elliott welcomed the change in policy from the Government regarding free school meals that had occurred since he had submitted the question.

In response the Leader noted his agreement with Councillor R Elliott regarding the welcome change of policy by the Government. The Leader noted that the decision had been made by Members representing the Wales Ward to support the provision of free school meals, using funds from their allocated Community Leadership Fund. The Leader noted that this action did not promote inequality as Members in other Wards could have acted accordingly if they had so wished. The Leader advised that this decision had been taken before the Government announcement that the proposed extension of the holiday activity programme, including funding for free school meals to cover England during the school holidays in 2021 had been made.

There was no supplementary question.

**(2) Councillor Cowles** asked the Cabinet Member for Housing “In the next stage of Selective Licensing I am informed that it may take up to 3 years to complete house inspections. Surely it is unreasonable, indeed unfair, to force landlords to pay for a license 3 years ahead of any inspection being carried out”.

In response the Cabinet Member for Housing stated that that he did not think it was unreasonable or unfair. The Cabinet Member advised that it would, however, be unreasonable and unfair to abandon tenants in areas with acute needs and where the standard of properties was poor. The

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Cabinet Member advised that the Selective Licence Scheme and its associated fee did not solely purchase a housing inspection, but also paid for enhanced engagement and targeted enforcement in order to seek to improve properties in the designated areas.

The Cabinet Member noted that the Selective Licensing declaration had been a 5 year scheme with inspections being targeted based on risk with those properties that had been assessed at a higher risk being dealt with first, with further inspections being arranged where further concerns were raised. The Cabinet Member advised that the new designations for Selective Licensing areas had been made on the basis of properties being in areas with high levels of deprivation and sought to improve the quality of property in these areas so that the poorest residents of Rotherham had access to good quality housing.

As a supplementary question Councillor Cowles asked whether the delays in an inspection being paid for and taking place were acceptable. Councillor Cowles also questioned the ability of any rental property to reach the level of electrical safety as required by the latest 19<sup>th</sup> Edition standards.

The Cabinet Member advised that all properties that had had an inspection paid for had received one, and noted that detailed inspections took time, and as such should not be rushed.

**(3) Councillor Cowles** asked the Cabinet Member for Housing “You informed me that during the 5 years of the highly successful Selective Licensing Scheme, 5 Enforcement Notices were issued in Eastwood for environmental infringements, an average of one per year. Despite the fact that backyards full of rubbish can still be found, and one per year being highly successful, what number between zero and one equates to success?”

In response the Cabinet Member advised that the previous 5 year Selective Licensing project in Eastwood had provided enhanced enforcement and support for landlords with 65 licenses being revoked in Eastwood during the lifetime of the Scheme. The Cabinet Member noted that 5 of these revocations were directly related to anti-social behaviour and environmental issues.

The Cabinet Member noted further that one revocation had been due to the failure of a landlord to remove waste from a rear garden on Russell Street, Eastwood where the landlord had also failed to satisfy the Council that they had taken necessary steps to ensure sufficient background checks had been carried out in relation to a new tenant. The Cabinet Member advised that other license revocations that had taken place related to landlords or their tenants, being linked to a series of anti-social behaviour incidents relating to either disorder, noise or harassment.

The Cabinet Member advised that the revocation of a license was just one of the many tools available for officers to use in such circumstances and stated that the number of actual Enforcement Notices served over the life of the Scheme that covered environmental and housing issues had been 1,053 in Eastwood and 5,235 across the Borough as a whole during the 5 year period. The Cabinet Member assured Councillor Cowles that in addition to these formal Notices the Council had also undertaken a much larger number of informal actions to address concerns about properties without the need to use formal legal processes.

As a supplementary question Councillor Cowles asked for a response to the email that he had sent that had requested further information on the reasons for the licence revocations.

The Cabinet Member advised that Councillor Cowles should contact him to request the information that he required and that he would be able to supply the information that showed that all activity that had been carried out correctly. The Cabinet Member reaffirmed that over the period of operation of the Scheme 1,053 Enforcement Notices in Eastwood and 5,235 across the Borough had been issued.

**(4) Councillor Carter** asked the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health “How many of the Borough’s care homes have active cases of Covid-19 and what measures are the Council taking with other agencies to try and mitigate its impact?”

In response the Cabinet Member noted his sincere thanks to all care home staff across the Borough for their hard work and dedication over the period of the pandemic in keeping residents in care homes safe. The Cabinet Member advised that cases in care homes varied daily, but based on the information held on the day that Councillor Carter’s question was submitted (Friday 6th November 2020) that there had been 7 care homes reporting more than 2 confirmed cases of Covid-19, out of a total of 84 care homes in the Borough. The Cabinet Member noted that this level of cases triggered a Public Health Incident Management Team meeting that was attended by the care home manager and health and social care professionals in order to investigate the outbreak and to ensure that there were sufficient infection control measures in place.

Councillor Carter noted his agreement with the Cabinet Member’s remarks regarding the excellent work of care home staff throughout the pandemic. As supplementary question Councillor Carter asked for further information on how the Council worked to manage virus outbreaks in care homes.

The Cabinet Member detailed the specific actions that the Council had implemented along with Rotherham CCG to support care homes and to mitigate the impact of a Covid-19 outbreak, and advised that in extreme cases the Director of Public Health could stop all visits to a care home.

**(5) Councillor Albiston** asked the Leader of the Council “How many individuals were provided support, through the Community Hub/Covid volunteer scheme by Ward between March and June?” Councillor Albiston also noted her thanks to all Council staff and volunteers who had and continued to provide support to residents via the Community Hub.

In response the Leader concurred with Councillor Albiston’s thanks to the staff and volunteers who had been involved in delivering Community Hub services and supporting Rotherham residents. The Leader advised that for the period 26th March to 30th June, 3,280 requests for support had been received. The Leader advised that for the period from 9th April information on the number of requests received was also available for each Ward and advised that this information would be sent to Councillor Albiston.

As a supplementary question Councillor Albiston asked how the Council was ensuring that all those in the community who needed support were being identified and receiving the support that they needed.

The Leader advised that the Council used information from a wide variety of sources to identify residents in need of support, and noted that while he was confident that everyone the Council knew about who were in need of support was receiving it, unfortunately there would always been a small number of people who were not known about and therefore could not be reached.

**(6) Councillor Carter** asked the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health “How has the Drug and Alcohol Service been affected by and adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic?”

In response the Cabinet Member advised that Change, Grow, Live Rotherham, who was the local provider of services, had remained open to people accessing the Service or who were needing to access drug and alcohol support throughout the pandemic. The Cabinet Member noted that in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and Service users, all face-to-face group work and non-essential drug testing had however been suspended. In addition, changes to the inside of buildings had been made in order to allow staff and Service users to safely social distance and interact safely. The Cabinet Member stated that any face-to-face contact had been and continued to be prioritised for those requiring a clinical intervention, for example access to prescribing or where there were welfare concerns.

The Cabinet Member advised that so far during the pandemic, the Service had introduced virtual group work, intervention posts over social media and had also maintained contact with Service users by telephone, and that where they had been concerns over someone’s welfare, doorstep checks had been completed. It was also noted that for any Service user without a telephone, access had been provided to phones and for people

without access to the internet who wanted to engage in virtual group work, they had been provided internet access free of charge.

As a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked whether there had been a reduction in the number of referrals to support services during the pandemic and what action was being taken to encourage those who may need help to seek assistance.

The Cabinet Member advised Councillor Carter that he would arrange a for a written response to be sent to him as he did not have the figures to hand on referral numbers.

**(7) Councillor Albiston** asked the Leader of the Council “What steps are the Council taking to ensure people who lack access to the internet and technology are not further disadvantaged through service, information and support being driven online?”

In response the Leader stated that the Council would never disadvantage any resident from accessing the services that they required regardless of how they contacted the Council. The Leader noted that the Council’s Customer Access Strategy recognised that Rotherham’s communities were diverse, with a wide range of people who all had differing needs and preferences, which was why the Strategy had been designed to ensure that all residents would have equal access to the information and help they needed. The Leader assured Councillor Albiston that it was recognised that not all residents could get online, and as such service delivery methods had been designed in such a way that a resident would always receive the same information and service regardless of how they had chosen to contact the Council.

The Leader advised that since April 2020, over 104,000 digital forms had been completed with 76% of these being completed through self-serve online, and 24% being completed by staff in the contact centre. The Leader also noted that between April and September 2020 the Contact Centre had answered over 240,000 calls and had also made thousands of outgoing calls in response to customer requests for help and advice. The Leader reaffirmed the Council’s commitment to face-to-face customer access and noted the ambition of the Council, that once safe to do so, increased face to face access would be developed in Libraries across Rotherham.

As a supplementary question Councillor Albiston asked whether the development of the Council’s Digital Strategy could be done in way that took account of the impact of the pandemic and asked that a set of measures for assessing how disadvantaged residents were accessing services be set in order to enable the Council to see how the Digital Strategy was ensuring access to services for these residents.

The Leader noted that the issue of access to services was a multi-faceted problem, with access to the internet being one of several issues that some

residents faced in accessing services. The Leader advised that the increased availability of wi-fi in Neighbourhood Centres would be looked at in order to make access to services easier. The Leader advised that while face-to-face customer service access was not currently possible, extra efforts were being made to reach residents by phone.

**(8) Councillor Carter** asked the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health “As the pandemic has led to changes in Adult Social Care based at the homes of residents compared to those in residential and nursing homes. How does the Council see the changes to this sector moving forward?”

In response the Cabinet Member advised that the most significant challenge for all Adult Care Services across the Country would continue to be the financial sustainability of the sector and the fair pricing for Care and Support Services following a decade of austerity. The Cabinet Member noted the frustration of many that despite promises from the Government that there was little sign of Government taking any action to reform the Social Care Sector. The Cabinet Member advised that the Council was anticipating an increase in demand for Home Care and Support Services and, therefore, there would be a greater demand on reablement teams to support Home First and hospital discharge processes. It was noted that this demand could result in care homes for older people being not viable due to high void rates with a reducing number of placements and lack of interest from self-funders.

The Cabinet Member advised that there were also concerns regarding the impact of Covid-19 resulting in an increased demand in some areas such as mental health provision. It was also noted that additional support for informal carers would also require significant national investment on an ‘invest to save basis’ as informal carers had had to respond to the impacts of the pandemic and reduced levels of care and support options for extended periods of time in recent months.

The Cabinet Member noted that addressing Adult Social Care workforce shortages as a result of existing vacancies, not just the pandemic, would also need to be a priority, and advised that a lack of career progression and the attractiveness of rival NHS positions and retail jobs made the recruitment to the sector challenging. The Cabinet Member advised that by applying the Council’s Social Value policy and campaigning for fair pay for care and support staff at the Living Wage Foundation rate of at least £9.30 per hour remained a key objective in order to ensure that vacancies were filled, turn-over was reduced and service quality remained high.

As a supplementary question Councillor Carter noted the difficulties surrounding the workforce strategy in this area and asked whether the rates of staff turnover previously experienced had worsened during the pandemic and whether staff turnover had impacted negatively on the provision of services.



The Cabinet Member advised that staff absences due to illness or having to isolate had impacted more on service delivery than staff turnover during the pandemic. The Cabinet Member noted however that it was still important in order to ensure high quality care to make the sector a more attractive career choice.

**(9) Councillor Albiston** asked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Neighbourhood Working "What factors are considered when identifying suitable properties to use as emergency accommodation, for our most vulnerable children and young people?"

In response the Deputy Leader stated that the Council only used emergency accommodation for Looked After Children in exceptional circumstances and where this was necessary in order to keep a child safe. The Deputy Leader advised that the Council had 3 properties in the Borough that were sometimes used for this purpose, and that each property would be identified based on the individual context of each child and on the reasons why they needed to be accommodated in an emergency.

The Deputy Leader advised that such allocations would always be based on the individual needs of a child that may include considerations such as the need to accommodate a larger sibling group or the geographical location of the accommodation required.

The Deputy Leader went on to advise that the Council's strategy was to develop its own residential provision, including plans to register 2 homes for emergency accommodation. It was noted that the identification of properties for this purpose had been based on a number of factors, including the amount of space available, the availability of outdoor space, proximity to services and schools and proximity to neighbours. It was noted further that the quality of the property, both indoors and outdoors was also a factor for consideration in order to ensure that children were living in suitable accommodation that felt like a home regardless of their length of stay.

As a supplementary question Councillor Albiston asked whether it was appropriate for the Council to place Looked After Children in inadequate accommodation in a deprived area that was close to where elderly people lived. Councillor Albiston advised that such an action had caused problems for neighbours with antisocial behaviour and noise nuisance.

The Deputy Leader noted the results of the OFSTED inspection of services and that as such stated that he did not recognise the basis of the allegation of an inadequate placement, but advised that Councillor Albiston should pass any concerns directly to him so that they could be investigated.

**(10) Councillor Carter** asked the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy “With home working becoming an ever more permanent feature, does the Council plan to cut its building-based office spaces, and renegotiate the contract for its plush office space at Riverside House?”

In response the Cabinet Member advised that during the pandemic, working from home had played a crucial part in maintaining essential Council services, but that equally Riverside House had continued to provide a physical base for essential services that could not be operated remotely, for services normally based in other buildings that had temporarily closed, as well as additional services such as the Community Hub. The Cabinet Member stated that whilst the number of staff using the building throughout the period had dramatically reduced, the flexibility and space of the building had enabled these services that had needed to be operated from an office base to operate safely and in line with social distancing rules.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council continually assessed and challenged the use of the Council’s operational property, and that as well as providing resilience throughout the pandemic, Riverside House had enabled ongoing improvements and efficiencies for the Council’s estate. It was noted that since 2018 in addition to a £500,000 annual saving negotiated on Riverside House, the Council had closed 13 separate buildings which had reduced annual revenue costs by £372,000. The Cabinet Member noted that working from home had presented both challenges and opportunities for staff welfare and for the operation of services, and that in the long-term the future of how the Council’s office-based services would be delivered would remain under consideration.

The Cabinet Member concluded in noting that the Council would not be drawn into a race to the bottom as the Council’s staff were dedicated public servants and deserved a decent environment in which to work. The Cabinet Member advised the facilities at Riverside House were not plush, but provided the facilities that all staff should expect, being a desk to work at, in a safe environment, alongside colleagues.

Councillor Carter noted his support for homeworking and asked as a supplementary question whether Riverside House would be kept in the future.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that since 2018, in addition to a £500,000 annual saving negotiated on Riverside House, the Council had closed 13 separate buildings which had reduced annual revenue costs by £372,000.

**(11) Councillor Carter** asked the Cabinet Member for Housing “As the second lockdown starts and a harsh winter looming, what are the latest figures for homelessness within the Borough?”

In response the Cabinet Member advised that the current homeless caseload was 410, compared to 354 before the pandemic in March 2020.

The Cabinet Member noted that this figure included people in temporary accommodation and at risk of homelessness and was not the number of rough sleepers.

As a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked what measures the Council was taking to reduce rough sleeping and assist those in temporary accommodation or at risk of homelessness to gain secure accommodation.

The Cabinet Member provided information on the activities being carried out by the Council and advised that the Rough Sleeper Team actively went out and about locating rough sleepers in the early hours of the morning alongside the police and voluntary sector partners. It was noted that the Rough Sleeper Team would always respond to all reports of anyone sleeping rough and offer temporary accommodation to anyone on the street, or at risk of being on the street, with a same day or next working day, assessment. The Cabinet Member also advised that the Council had been awarded funding from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding, to provide additional financial resources available in order to find more permanent homes for those temporary housed during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member advised that the amount of temporary accommodation owned by the Council had increased but noted with sadness that demand was increasing due to increased levels of homelessness that was being caused for many reasons in addition to the impact of the pandemic.

**(12) Councillor Carter** asked the Leader of the Council “Two weeks after the City Region announced funding for regional economic support packages to businesses the details have not been made available for applications via council websites. Does the Council Leader feel this delay is acceptable given the impact this could have on local jobs and the viability of local businesses?”

In response the Leader noted the numerous changes of Government policy with regard to supporting businesses in tier two, tier three and later in national restrictions that had caused huge amounts of extra work for the Council in creating the processes needed to administer the available support. The Leader assured Councillor Carter that officers were working hard to implement the systems needed to enable businesses to apply for support they needed and that the application process for businesses entitled to further support would be finalised very shortly. The Leader reaffirmed the Council’s commitment to supporting businesses and noted that the finalised scheme would be able to operate on a South Yorkshire-wide basis in order to provide support to businesses in a joined-up manner.

As a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked which types of businesses would be targeted for discretionary support with the funding that had been made available to the Council.

The Leader advised that £30million of discretionary support had been made available for all of the South Yorkshire area up until the end of March 2021 and as such the ability of the Council to support businesses was limited. The Leader assured Councillor Carter that the priority would be support businesses that had not been able to claim any support from nationally operated schemes.

**(13) Councillor Carter** asked the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety “In the past 6 months how many complaints has the Council received about an acrid smell in Brinsworth, and what enforcement action has the council taken to address this?”

In response the Cabinet Member noted that she would welcome any current information on the problem that Councillor Carter had regarding the problem and advised that in the last 6 months, the Council had only received contact from one new complainant, relating to an acrid smell in the area. The Cabinet Member assured Councillor Carter that the case was still however live, and in response to this long running concern the Council had introduced daily monitoring of smells in the Brinsworth area. It was noted that observations were also being made from the boundaries of 2 plants involved in the production of bituminous materials which were possible sources of this type of odour. The Cabinet Member advised that one of the suspected plants was within Rotherham and that the other was located in Sheffield. It was noted, however, that to date, it had not been possible to identify the source of the odour beyond reasonable doubt, but that daily visits continued to be made and that any further complaints would be swiftly looked into.

As a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked which Authority would be responsible for any enforcement action when the source of the smell had been identified.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Authority where eventually the smell was found to emanating from would be responsible for any enforcement action and noted excellent working relationship between the Environmental Protection Team at Sheffield City Council and their counterparts in Rotherham.

**423. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items for consideration.