

COUNCIL MEETING
13th January, 2021

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

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

424. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor referred to the following Mayoral engagements:

- Attending a small, socially distanced ceremony to mark the Christmas lights switch on in All Saints' Square alongside boxing coach, Jamie Kennedy, the Rotherham Advertiser's Community Awards Winner.
- Taking part in an online event to mark the annual "Reclaim the Night" event that promoted action against male violence towards women, with the theme for 2020 being 'empowerment'.
- Announcing the winners at the Council's virtual "Big Hearts Big Changes Awards" Ceremony.

The Mayor also advised that she would be taking part in a video to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January that would be shared on the Council's social media channels.

425. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Whysall.

426. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

427. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 11th November, 2020, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

428. PETITIONS

The Mayor advised that no petitions had been received since the previous Council Meeting held on 11th November, 2020.

429. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Cusworth, Napper and Senior declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 (Housing Rents and Services Charges 2021/22) as they had family members who held a Council tenancy.

Councillors Andrews, Fenwick-Green, Lelliott, McNeely and Wyatt declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in agenda item 12 (Housing Rents and Services Charges 2021/22) as they held a Council tenancy.

430. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(1) Mr. Felstead asked what, following on from the Cabinet Member's comments at the beginning of December aired in the Cabinet Meeting, was it in particular that inflamed him about Mr. Felstead enquiring about the financial performance of the Willmott Dixon housing schemes?

Councillor Beck explained he was happy to receive and answer questions about the financial performance of this and any of the Council's projects. As Mr. Felstead was aware the Council had provided as much information it could about the finances of the town centre housing scheme. The Council had worked incredibly hard to bring this investment and programme together alongside the Sheffield City Region and Homes England to draw down valuable funding. The Cabinet Member was extremely proud of what was being produced on site.

Mr. Felstead was, of course, welcome to form his own opinions about that, but when he falsely claimed that there had been some sort of irregularity or that someone had acted illegally, as Cabinet Member the false claims would be robustly refuted.

In a supplementary question Mr. Felstead referred to the withholding of financial information, which he believed to be unlawful by the Cabinet Member. He also referred to the Independent Review that had been undertaken, which had provided him with relevant information, the value for money assessment and the lack of documentation of any written recommendations to the Council. He regarded the build cost of the accommodation on the town centre site to be £60,000 per unit, with a total cost of around £10 million. The Council were spending £34 million so he, therefore, asked what were the abnormal costs totalling £20 million?

Councillor Beck confirmed he had not got that level of detail nor financial figures available so would respond to the member of the public in writing.

431. 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.

432. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader wished all in attendance a Happy New Year but noted that he like everyone else, had been hoping for a better start to the new year than the situation that was currently being faced. The Leader noted that a new more transmissible variant of Covid-19 was now in circulation across the country and was sadly now in Rotherham. The Leader advised that the virus was spreading rapidly and stated that 20% of confirmed cases in the Borough were now being linked to the new strain of the virus, compared to just 2% in December.

The Leader noted that the National Lockdown measures that had been reintroduced across the whole of the country from Tuesday, 5th January, in an attempt to try and reduce the transmission of Covid-19 were set to be reviewed on 15th February and noted that the regulations expired on 31st March. The Leader advised that the situation was very concerning and detailed the measures, including staying at home as much as possible, that were required to try and bring the virus back under control.

The Leader also noted the challenges that the closure of schools would bring for school staff, parents and students. The Leader noted that support for businesses impacted by the pandemic would continue to be offered both nationally and locally and advised that the Council would be encouraging all businesses to apply for support.

The Leader provided an overview of the current situation in Rotherham regarding the pandemic including information on cases and hospital admissions. The Leader advised that to reduce pressures on health services it was essential that everyone did their bit to keep each other safe. The Leader noted that, despite the challenges, that there was positive news with the arrival of vaccines and provided information on the vaccination programme in Rotherham.

The Leader noted his thanks to all Council staff who had worked to deliver services right across the Council during the pandemic. The Leader noted the annual staff awards that had taken place virtually in December and advised that it was now more important than ever to celebrate the work of public servants. The Leader advised that Deborah Thomson had been named as Employee of the Year for her work in rolling out IT provision and thanked her for all her work, work that had contributed to allowing the Council meeting being held to take place.

433. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Resolved: - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 23rd November and 10th and 21st December, 2020, be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

434. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2020/21

Pursuant to Cabinet Minute No.91 (2020/21) consideration was given to a report in respect of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021-22.

The report stated that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recorded all expenditure and income relating to the provision of Council housing and related services, and as such the Council was required to produce an HRA Business Plan that was reviewed annually to set out its investment priorities over a 30 year period. The report provided a detailed technical overview of the current position of the HRA Business Plan and detailed the reasons for proposed changes. It was noted that the report was to be considered alongside the subsequent report that detailed the proposed levels for Housing Rents, Non-Dwelling Rents, District Heating and Service Charges as well as the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2021/22.

The report stated that since the last update that there had been no significant Government policy changes that affected the business plan, however it was noted that there had been some significant downward changes to CPI (Consumer Prices Index). It was noted that the proposed HRA Business Plan recognised the importance of continuing investment in new affordable homes and would continue to be amended and reported annually.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Housing noted that despite the challenges that the continuation of Right to Buy sales presented for the HRA Business Plan, the Council continued to be committed to delivering new affordable housing across the Borough. The Cabinet Member also noted the Council's continued commitment to, and continued success, in ensuring that all Council homes met or exceeded the national Decent Homes Standard. The Cabinet Member also noted the key themes and objectives of the plan that focussed on delivering housing growth across all tenure types, including shared ownership, and the replacement of homes lost to Right to Buy sales.

Councillor Turner asked how the size of the HRA budget compared to the size of the budget in previous years. The Cabinet Member advised that the budget would be slightly larger in 2021/22 due to the proposed

increase in the rents. Councillor B. Cutts noted the amount of development of housing on what had previously been agricultural land over time.

Councillor Cusworth welcomed the proposals and the focus on house building and the provision of new Council properties for social rent and asked for further information on how this was being enabled. The Cabinet Member noted the various innovative schemes and tenure mix that the Council was using to deliver more homes across Rotherham, including the successful programme of strategic acquisitions where the Council had purchased new properties from developers.

Councillor Watson noted that the Council's commitment to delivering new homes and building new Council rented properties was a political choice that had been taken in order to replace the homes lost to Right to Buy sales and to ensure that there were sufficient decent homes for Rotherham residents.

Councillor Carter noted his support for the delivery of new homes but stated that he would not be able to support the proposals due to the proposals for rents contained in the subsequent report on Housing Rents and Service Charges. The Cabinet Member noted that by voting against the HRA Business Plan that Councillor Carter would be voting against the delivery of new homes in Rotherham.

Resolved: -

- 1) That the 2021-22 Base Case Option 1 for the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, as detailed in the report of the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, be approved.
- 2) That the housing growth budgets, as detailed at paragraph 1.6 of the report be reprofiled, to ensure that resources be available at the right time to deliver on the commitments as detailed in the Annual Housing Development Programme.
- 3) That the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan be reviewed annually in order to provide an updated financial position.

Mover: - Councillor Beck

Seconder:- Councillor Alam

435. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - HOUSING RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

Pursuant to Cabinet Minute No.91 (2020/21) consideration was given to a report that sought approval for the proposed values of the Housing Rents, Non-Dwelling Rents, District Heating and Service Charges as well as the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2021/22.

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

It was proposed that in line with the Government policy on rents for social housing, that rents should be increased by 1.5% (CPI (as of September 2020 plus 1%) in 2021/22. It was noted that this would result in an average rent increase for social rented of £1.12 per week from £74.21 to £75.33 per week. It was noted that the increase in rent would increase rental income by approximately £1.1million that would then be used to support the ongoing maintenance and management of services for Council homes.

For non-dwelling properties, such as garages, garage plots, cooking gas supplies and communal facilities, it was proposed that ,in line with the Council's policy on fees and charges, that a 2% increase should be implemented in order to enable cost of supplying and managing these services to be covered. It was also proposed that there should be no increase in the charges for District Heating as it had been projected that the scheme would break even in 2021/22.

The Cabinet Member for Housing noted that only around one-third of tenants would pay the full increase in rents, with the rest being supported by being in receipt of full or partial Housing Benefit.

Councillor Jepson noted his support for the proposals and the Council's activity to provide more social rented homes to replace homes lost to Right to Buy sales.

Councillor Carter stated that the Council should not be increasing rents at a time when families across the Borough were facing tough financial times due the economic impact of the pandemic and advised that the Council should be freezing, not increasing rents at this difficult time.

Councillor Ellis stated her support for the proposals and the Council's commitment to providing decent homes for residents and noted that the pandemic had highlighted the importance of everyone having a safe and secure home. Councillor Watson noted that the activities detailed in the HRA Business Plan that had just been approved were dependent on the proposed rent increases, and as such stated that all Members who had supported the HRA Business Plan must also support the proposed rent and service charges. Councillor Watson emphasised that most tenants would not be impacted by the increase in rents due the support they received from Housing Benefit.

Councillor Mallinder stated her support for the replacement of homes lost to Right to Buy sales as social rented properties provided safe, secure and good quality housing to many people. Councillor Cusworth noted that the pandemic had created an increase of homelessness and asked how many people on the waiting list for a Council property were homeless. Councillors Steele and Walsh stated their support for the proposed rent increases and noted that the proposed rent increases were small but necessary in order to ensure that Council homes could continue to be maintained at a decent standard.

The Cabinet Member thanked Members for their support of the proposals. In response to Councillor Cusworth, the Cabinet Member advised that there were currently over 7,000 people on the waiting list for a Council property and noted that this showed the high level of demand that existed for decent homes at reasonable rents. In response to Councillor Carter, the Cabinet Member advised that the small rent increase was required in order to maintain homes to a decent standard and also to enable the delivery of sufficient decent homes in the long term. The Cabinet Member re-emphasised that only around one third of tenants would pay the full increase in rents, with the rest being supported by being in receipt of full or partial Housing Benefit.

Resolved: -

- 1) That dwelling rents be increased by 1.5% in 2021/22 in line with the Government policy on rents for social housing which allows rents to increase by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (as of September 2020), plus 1%.
- 2) That shared ownership rents be increased by 1.6% in 2021/22 in line with the Government policy on rents for social housing which allows rents to increase by the Retail Price Index (RPI) (as of September 2020), plus 0.5%.
- 3) That charges for garages and parking spaces, communal facilities, cooking gas and the use of laundry facilities for 2021/22 be increased by 2%, in line with the Council's policy on fees and charges.
- 4) That the unit charge per Kwh for District Heating Schemes for 2021/22 remain unchanged at the level set by Council in December 2017.
- 5) That the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2021/22 be approved.

Mover: - Councillor Beck

Seconder: - Councillor Alam

436. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward updates for Wingfield, Dinnington, Hellaby and Holderness 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

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

Team and would work with officers and residents from a range of organisations to respond to residents.

Councillors Allen, R. Elliott and Williams, on behalf of the Wingfield Ward, gave a review of what had taken place during 2019/20 together with the services necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic. Initiatives that had taken place in the Ward included:-

- An end of Term event for partners and local groups in February 2020 using the Spotlight Theatre facilities at Wingfield Academy
- A Christmas tree on the site of the old public hall in Greasbrough
- The Greasbrough Gala held on 12th October, 2019 in Greasbrough Park
- Isolation – a friendly bench purchased and situated in Greasbrough Park, supported the annual OAP Christmas party and reassurance visits undertaken with Neighbourhood Officers and PCSOs
- Work with 2 churches – St. Mary's and St. John's to bring about social events to bring communities together
- Events organised – Vintage afternoon tea (2nd November 2019), Remembrance Day Service (10th November, 2019), Summer Fayre (29th June, 2019)
- Anti-social behaviour – continued work with Housing and the Police on St. John's Green with new lighting and fencing due soon to increase the safety for the residents of the flats, work with Streetpride on clearing/cutting back on entrances to underpasses and painted to make them lighter and brighter to feel safer
- Work with Housing and their Commercial Estate Services to secure funding to demolish garages on Ochre Dike and refresh shop frontages and planting, acquire new business residents and the provision of a car park. This had reduced anti-social behaviour and provided a pleasant environment
- Young people – networking meeting to receive the results of the consultation exercise undertaken by Early Help and contributed to by over 300 young people. A basket swing had been purchased in accordance with their wishes and progress was being made on the requested Greasbrough Multi-Use Games Area
- Neighbourhood working - Partnership working had brought some good successes in the Ward. Honoured to host the international Nemesis project through the primary schools in the Wingfield Ward. The legacy project of this work would see a new SEND provision at Rockingham School
- Improvements would be sought for the area surrounding what would be the new Coach Road junction hopefully demolishing garages off Main Street and resurfacing, the making of a new car park and to introduce a new green corridor to link the entrance to Green Park to the recreation park and onwards to the new shared use pathway and cycle lane further along Fenton Road

- Further partnership working included the installation of a new toucan crossing on Fenton Road, reassurance visits and the removal of hedges and shrubs around Kimberworth Park Road to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase community safety
- Thanks to all the partners and the Neighbourhood Team

Councillors Mallinder, Tweed and Vjestica, on behalf of the Dinnington Ward, gave an update on their Ward priorities and welcomed the opportunity to thank the Neighbourhood Team and listed a number of initiatives that had taken place in the Ward and as a result the community were benefiting from:-

- Supporting communities to address the Covid-19 crisis
- Provision of support from the Ward budget to a number of local community groups including Laughton-en-le-Morthen Parish Council's project, the Dinnington Community Coronavirus Volunteer Group and Dinnington Salvation Army, in order to enable them to provide food and support to vulnerable residents
- Helping Hands – which included the delivering of meals
- Ward Members volunteering including a “befriender” through the Council's Rotherham Heroes Scheme and calling vulnerable residents through the NHS volunteer programme
- Prior to the pandemic, active engagement in work to save Rother Valley College both with residents in the form of a petition and with parents/partners
- Happy to Chat bench in Dinnington to encourage residents to talk to each other. St. Leonard's Church and the Council worked together to site the bench within the Church grounds
- Provision of an electric powered cycle for use by the local PCSO team in Dinnington
- Renewal and upgrading of playground facilities in conjunction with Laughton Parish Council
- Billy and Belinda bollards purchased and installed outside Laughton All Saints School
- Dinnington Town Football Club to bid for external funding to improve and develop their facilities
- Funded facilities for a U9s girls football team in Dinnington
- Supported Dinnington Bowling Club with storage facilities and new equipment
- Funded books for a new library at Dinnington Primary School
- Thanks to the Neighbourhood Team

The Mayor (Councillor Jenny Andrews), Councillors Brian Cutts and John Turner, on behalf of the Hellaby Ward, gave an update on their Ward priorities and listed a number of initiatives that had taken place in the Ward including:-

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

- Hellaby Community Hall – supported the Parish Council in the refurbishment of the kitchen
- Hellaby Newsletter
- Community skips in Maltby and Hellaby
- Maltby – requested a path across a green to improve access to local transport and local shops. This was now completed and included pedestrian safety
- Supported the lowering of speed limits in Hellaby village and other road safety issues in Bramley and Maltby
- Local school requested support for library for the children to improve the reading of local children
- Electric bike purchased for local PCSO
- Supported local groups in the community and an event organised to bring everyone together to thank everyone for their hard work
- Work with Wickersley Parish Council on the project of a solar light system illuminating a well used path through a graveyard
- Reflective bollards on Morthen Road
- Help provided to the Austen Drive Allotment Society
- Community flower bed
- A new cooker for and decoration of The Lings – a very much used community group building
- St. Alban's Church, together with Wickersley Parish Council, purchased a new flagpole
- Thanks to the Neighbourhood Team and local PCSOs

Councillors M. Elliott, Pitchley and Taylor, on behalf of the Holderness Ward, gave an update on their Ward priorities and welcomed the opportunity to thank the Neighbourhood Working Group, staff and volunteers and listed a number of initiatives that had taken place in the Ward and as a result the community were benefiting from:-

- Supported S26 Covid-19 Community Support Group set up by a local resident to help the most vulnerable
- Offered Community Leadership to offer financial support to help with running costs and PPE as well as time in delivering prescriptions
- S26 Food Bank set up - received donations from local business, residents and Aston TARA
- Thanks to Aston-cum-Aughton Parish Council for their financial support and use of the community building
- Continued to carry out socially distanced walkabouts. Residents said their neighbourhood and environment was very important to them so continued to look at ways of making residents proud of where they lived with the provision of free compost bins across the Ward, provision of dog bins and community clean-up days in partnership with Housing and the Police
- The Police had continued to carry out regular speedwatch operations
- Community litter picks and residents organised their own small group litterpicks

- Gardening Competition open to all residents
- Support for the local bowling group to purchase construction materials to enable a self-build project which vastly improved their facilities
- Bowling Group provided lessons for some pupils from Springwood Academy
- To help encourage children into learning an approach had been made to Gullivers Theme Park who had generously offered half price tickets. Ward Members had purchased 80 tickets and awarded 10 tickets to each of the schools in the Ward. Each School had awarded their tickets as rewards e.g. good attendance, lucky dip and exceptional attitude to learning. The response had been amazing
- In conjunction with Aston Leisure Centre, young person's fitness sessions with a professional instructor organised as well as "mini-me" sessions for mothers and their young children
- Stride Out Aston which enables women of all abilities to enjoy running in a safe and supportive manner
- Replacement of Alexandra Park sign – Springwood Academy had been approached for their pupils to design the sign. The winner and runners up was invited to see the sign made up as the finished article
- Event held to recognise the volunteers in the Ward
- Thanks to the Ward Co-ordinator

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

Mover:- Councillor Watson

Seconder:- Councillor Read

437. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PANELS

Pursuant to Minute No.339 consideration was given to a request to fill two vacant Labour Group seats on the Licensing Board and one vacant Labour Group seat on the Licensing Committee.

Resolved: -

- 1) That Councillor Stuart Sansome and Councillor Jayne Elliot be appointed to the Licensing Board.
- 2) That Councillor Jayne Elliot be appointed to the Licensing Committee.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Watson

438. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved: - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 19th November, 2020, be adopted.

Mover: - Councillor McNeely

Seconder:- Councillor Clark

439. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved: - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 24th November, 2020, be adopted.

Mover: - Councillor Wyatt

Seconder:- Councillor Walsh

440. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved: - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 11th November, 2020, be adopted.

Mover: - Councillor Roche

Seconder:- Councillor Mallinder

441. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved: - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board held on 5th and 26th November and 17th December, 2020, be adopted.

Mover: - Councillor Sheppard

Seconder: - Councillor Williams

442. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved: - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Board Sub-Committee held on 9th November and 1st, 7th and 15th December, 2020, be adopted.

Mover: - Councillor Ellis

Seconder: - Councillor Beaumont

443. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

(1) Councillor Cowles had once again read in the local paper that the Police and Crime Commissioner intended to increase the precept to pay for additional Police. The Police and Crime Commissioner had a department of 23 FTE's, so he asked could the Spokesperson explain briefly what measurable tangible benefit do these people along with the Police and Crime Panel contribute towards increasing the effectiveness of South Yorkshire Police?

Councillor Sansome pointed out that Councillor Cowles misunderstood the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner – which was set out in Legislation. The Police and Crime Commissioner:-

1. Produced a Police and Crime Plan which set out the priorities for the Force. The Plan was updated each year in line with any changing circumstances – such as changes in crime, the impact of the coronavirus.
2. Drew up, in conjunction with the Chief Constable, the annual budget for the Force and ensured that it balanced against funds available. These funds were Government grants (approximately 70%) and precept (approximately 30%). The precept was decided by the Police and Crime Commissioner, but only after consultation with Council Leaders, the Police and Crime Panel and the public.
3. Held the Chief Constable and the Force to account for the way they perform as a Force – for which the Police and Crime Commissioner needed evidence. He did that formally in a Public Accountability Board meeting which was open to the press and public, at which senior officers present reports, including a quarterly report on the performance of the Police in Rotherham district.
4. Commissioned services – such as Victim Support Services.
5. Used assets recovered from criminals to fund local groups across South Yorkshire who were all helping to reduce crime or anti-social behaviour.

All the above activity contributed in different ways in helping the Force to meet the objectives that the public would like to see in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, supporting victims and the vulnerable, treating people fairly and making Rotherham a safe place.

All the above required staff. The Police and Crime Commissioner could 'hide' these costs by having staff on the payroll of the Force, but he chose to make everything he did as transparent as possible.

The Police and Crime Panel consisted of independent members and local Councillors from each of the four districts who once per month held the Police and Crime Commissioner to account on his performance. The meetings were held in public. Councillor Cowles's party, in at least one of its iterations, had a Member on it.

Councillor Cowles in his supplementary question confirmed he had not misunderstood what the Police and Crime Commissioner did. He referred to a meeting and discussion that had taken place before Christmas and the accountability and effectiveness of the Commissioner and the Panel.

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

The Police and Crime Commissioner still proposed to increase the precept, but failed to look at his own area to provide savings.

It was difficult to determine whether Police Officers that were recruited were operational and that, despite the Government putting more money into policing, South Yorkshire continued to have a higher crime rate. Councillors were still receiving complaints that the 101 service remained unsatisfactory and rather than the precept being increased further, it would be preferable to spend the increase in Council Tax in the area of Social Care and perhaps covering the cost of rent increases which had been debated earlier. It was, therefore, asked if the Police and Crime Commissioner was going to consult could the spokesperson please ask that he consult with Rotherham's Members.

Councillor Sansome shared the same frustrations about accountability and holding the Police and Crime Commissioner to account, but would indeed ask that the Police and Crime Commissioner provide evidence of savings and the precept details once these were known.

Councillor Cowles was urged, however, to contact his local policing team about crime in his Ward and escalate this to the District Commander in Rotherham if he remained dissatisfied.

(2) Councillor Napper asked with the 14.1% increase in the Police precept could the representative of the Police and Crime Panel advise how many more frontline Police Officers have been employed and how many officers have been lost over the same period of time and to which forces in South Yorkshire have the new officers been deployed to?

Councillor Sansome explained the increase in the Police precept was not yet known since it had not yet been set by the Police and Crime Commissioner. All the Police and Crime Commissioner knew at this stage was that if he was to support additional officers and keep the existing service going he could only do so with additional funding from the precept. The Government also recognised this and was allowing Police and Crime Commissioner's across the country to increase precepts by up to £15 on a Band D property. This would be a precept increase of about 7% - not 14.1%. Most properties in South Yorkshire, however, were in lower tax bands, mostly A and B.

The Government was also assuming in all its calculations that the precept would be set at the higher level. When the Government set out its plan to recruit more Police Officers and return South Yorkshire to the same level of Police Officers as there were under the last Labour Government, the maximum precept increase was required to make that happen.

If the Police and Crime Commissioner was able to fund additional officers there would be approximately 142 in the coming year.

Officers were deployed into each district according to a formula based mainly on population, but with some variance due to demand on the Force in that District and similarly like the previous question.

In a supplementary question Councillor Napper referred to the previous 14.1% increase, but sought information on how many police were recruited and employed and to where officers lost with redundancies etc. He was concerned about the 101 system and believed it was not working. He continued to experience problems in his own Ward with quad bikes and motorbikes and was frustrated with the apparent lack of action that the Police could take.

Councillor Sansome responded and confirmed that as a result of the 14% increase 90 additional officers had been requested. However, the Police and Crime Panel disagreed with the number and asked for additional numbers and this was increased to over one hundred more Police Officers.

There would always be natural wastage of officers, but it was important to maintain numbers. Whilst the Ward concerns about quad bikes were an issue, Councillor Napper, like Councillor Cowles, was advised to raise issues with local police officers and to escalate this to the District Commander if his concerns were not being addressed.

(3) Councillor R. Elliott explained he was informed the Police and Crime Panel had been asked to consider flexibility in policing and agree that PCSO's were moved around South Yorkshire as required. This would mean the transfer of PCSO's from Rotherham to Sheffield. This may have a detrimental effect on the crime figures in Rotherham and, therefore, was opposed to this suggestion. He asked would the Spokesperson oppose this proposal?

Councillor Sansome explained the deployment of PCSO's was an operational matter for the Chief Constable in consultation with District Commanders.

Some years ago, Neighbourhood Teams were disbanded and all uniformed officers became part of Response Teams, not related to neighbourhoods. Only PCSO's remained in neighbourhoods and this weakened the ability to respond quickly to incidents where someone with powers of arrest was needed.

There had since been a restoration of Neighbourhood Teams with Police Constables as well as PCSO's and the role of the PCSO in the new Teams was reviewed. In addition, with the expansion of Police Officer numbers, some PCSO's had sought to become Police Constables. There would be some moving around of PCSO's for these and other reasons.

The aim all the time was to strengthen the Neighbourhood Teams, but again to go back to the beginning deployment of PCSO's was a operational matter and not a political decision.

In a supplementary question Councillor R. Elliott asked that his feelings be fed back to the Police and Crime Panel as there were still insufficient Police Officers in Wards. The notion there was too many was ridiculous and pointed out many officers joined the ranks to serve in Rotherham. He asked, therefore, would the Spokesperson give his assurance to oppose any moves out of Rotherham and ensure the Police and Crime Panel did not accede to Sheffield.

Councillor Sansome reiterated the issues of moving Police Officers around the district was not a political decision, but operational by the District Commander. However, he would pass on concerns to the Police and Crime Commissioner, but also urged Councillor Elliott to make the District Commander aware of his concerns about the numbers of Police in Rotherham.

444. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

(1) Councillor Jepson asked would the Service look at increasing the funding available from their budget for the cleaning and maintenance of street furniture and allocating it to the area managers under the new zonal working system. This would enable all cleansing operations to be under the same Service area, better co-ordinated, improve the appearance of the Borough and the safety of its residents.

Councillor Allen explained any cleaning of street furniture that was necessary, and the installation of litter bins, was already undertaken by the Council's Zonal Teams.

However, the maintenance and installation of other street furniture, such as benches and bollards, was undertaken by Highway Services. This was due to the equipment and expertise required to undertake installation safely and to the required standard.

The Teams worked closely together and were all managed under the same Assistant Director for Community Safety and Streetscene Services.

The Council had delivered extra investment in Services to improve the safety and cleanliness of neighbourhoods over the last 2 years, including:-

- Investment in additional mechanical street sweepers across the Borough.
- £60,000 per year to allow scheduled weed control and cleansing to take place across the majority of the Borough's dual carriageways and arterial routes, once per year.

- £100,000 per year for an improved response to cleaning issues at the weekends.

At the same time, the additional capital investment that had been committed for bins would start to be delivered in the coming weeks, which should also help to improve the appearance of some street furniture.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jepson would like to see more pride being taken in the Borough and ensure that cleaning of signs, street name signs and street furniture were implemented. It just needed co-ordinated effort and a commitment from the Council and other interested parties. He himself would be happy to help out.

Councillor Allen gave an undertaking to organise a meeting once she had met with the Assistant Director with responsibility for that area. She would then facilitate discussions to see what could be arranged with the Zonal Team Managers and the logistics of such a task.

(2) Councillor Carter asked had the Council reduced the frequency of litter and dog waste bin collections during the pandemic, and what had the impact of this been?

Councillor Allen confirmed the Council had not reduced the frequency of litter or dog waste bin collections during the pandemic.

Like any Council or other public service, throughout the pandemic, the street cleaning teams had on occasions, suffered through staff absence due to illness and self-isolation. During the recent wintry weather, some street cleaning staff were also required to support gritting activities. Whilst this had sometimes impacted on services, the Cabinet Member was proud of the way the Service had been able to maintain the cleanliness of the Borough in this most difficult of times.

Councillor Carter was aware isolation was a big factor in the pandemic, but residents had noticed a visible deterioration in the street scene. He asked what had been the impact on the amount of waste being accrued in local areas and what additional measures was the Council taking to ensure local streets remained clean and tidy.

Councillor Allen concurred with the observations that there had been an increase especially in the amount of dog waste. This was an issue across the Borough and over the last few days this increase had not been quantified.

The Borough's country parks and green spaces had experienced an increased usage level, typically more relative to those seen in the summer months and as a result more waste was being deposited in containers than would normally be expected at this time of year.

(3) Councillor Carter asked what recent progress had been made on the Council's plan to become the Children's Capital of Culture?

Councillor Allen explained the Children's Capital of Culture would take place in 2025. Early work to develop the programme had continued throughout Covid-19 including early conversations and engagement with a range of children and young people's networks across Borough including:-

- Youth Cabinet;
- Children, Young People and Families Consortium;
- Children and Young People's Partnership Board; Young Inspectors;
- the formation of a Youth Curation Panel as part of a funded project through the Council's Museums, Arts and Heritage Service; and
- engagement through partners such as Gullivers, Grimm & Co and Imagine Rotherham (Local Cultural Education Partnership).

The outcome of this work had led to the development of a bid to Arts Council England which would be submitted later this month to fund the first phase of wider public engagement which had been co-designed with children and young people through the above process. A decision on funding was expected in April, 2021.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter welcomed the investment into Children's Services, but believed many residents would not think the initiative to be laudable given the Council's credibility and history in this area. He asked, therefore, what events were planned around the launch to ensure this benefitted children and young people in future years.

Councillor Allen agreed there would always be people critical of the Council, but the Service had 5 years before it embarked on this project. Rotherham as a Borough had travelled a long way and unfortunately there would always be individuals who failed to see change. Rotherham was a forward looking positive authority and serious about becoming the Children's Capital of Culture. It was impossible to identify what events would take place, but this would be subject to public consultation and be determined by those discussions with young people over the next few years.

(4) Councillor Albiston referred to Rotherham stating it was a 'Child Centred Borough' and asked what evidence was there that this was a reality?

Councillor Watson confirmed 6 years ago one of the priorities in the Council Improvement Plan was for Rotherham to become a 'Child Centred Borough.' To oversee delivery of this vision, the Child Friendly Rotherham Board was established. This was a member-led working group and included a range of partners.

Child Friendly Rotherham (as it was known at that time) was underpinned by a whole-Council approach and involved agencies working outside of Children and Young People's Services. Initially the Board was particularly useful in ensuring that the voices of children and young people were influencing key developments within the Council at that time. However, this approach had now become business as usual with the needs of children receiving a high priority across all directorates and agencies in the Borough.

The question asked for 'evidence of this' - this could be a long list indeed, but some examples included:-

- The RMBC Year Ahead Plan 20/21. Under the 5 themes the Council has identified the following objective... *Children and young people are protected, safeguarded and able to achieve their potential.*
- The child-centred legacy continues with Young People Take Over Days in the Council Chamber taking place annually.
- Children and young people were routinely involved in the recruitment and selection of staff and senior leaders in the Council and through our award winning Young Inspectors, Services were also evaluated and inspected by children and young people.
- Children and young people have shaped the Cultural Strategy and continue to be involved in the Rotherham, Children's Capital of Culture initiative and the Reimagining Rotherham work, which in turn, informed the Town Centre Master Plan.
- Across our schools, particularly in the past few months, we have seen just how committed our staff and teachers are wanting nothing but the best for our children. We have seen teachers, Family Support Workers and Social Workers collaborating to support our most vulnerable children during the pandemic, with staff going above and beyond to deliver food parcels, Free School Meals, Uniforms and Laptops.
- Sticking with education, there was a collective ownership of all key educational priorities through the activity of Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership, this brings all phases of education, Multi-Academy Trusts, Local Authority and educational partners together to support a child-centred approach to education outcomes for our children.
- There is a range of high quality childcare in the Borough to meet parent's needs – 98.1% of all Ofsted registered Early Years provision is judged Good or Outstanding (compared to 96.2% nationally).
- Take-up of early education was promoted to support improved outcomes for Rotherham children and take-up of 2 year old's early education was consistently high with over 80% of eligible children taking up a place.
- A package of support was in place to ensure that children with Special Educational Needs could access childcare and early education places with their peers without delays.

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

- At Key Stage 5 in 2019, the Rotherham 'A' Level or equivalent pass rate (A*- E grades) was 99.0%. The national pass rate reported on the BBC news website shows that the overall A*-E pass rate has remained at 97.6% showing the Rotherham LA average is 1.4% above the national average

In September 2019, the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board (RLSCB) transitioned into the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP). This was a further example of agencies, Health, Police and the Council working in a child-centred way to keep children safe.

A Peer Challenge led by the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Directors of Children's Services in March 2020 confirmed that there was longstanding and collective ownership of the SEND agenda in Rotherham again evidencing the commitment to a child-centred approach.

Child-centred was about all children in the Borough, but for the vulnerable and less fortunate the Council could take some comfort that it had a workforce that was child-centred and a Directorate that was rated Good by Ofsted. Children's Services had come a long way in 6 years. The most recent Ofsted Focused Visit in October 2020 reaffirmed that the Council was continuing to improve and reported that "Strong and effective multi-agency partnerships enabled the early identification of vulnerable children and that Early Help Services and Children's Social Care were integrated, promoting positive working relationships and a clear understanding of thresholds."

Throughout the pandemic the most vulnerable children had continued to be prioritised and seen. In Early Help over 7,000 visits to children took place between the 2 national lockdowns with a further 5,000 taking place virtually.

Likewise, in Social Care in person visits had been prioritised since the commencement of the pandemic and between March and October 2020 over 23,000 in person visits were undertaken by Social Workers with only just over 1,800 being undertaken virtually. Since October reliance on virtual visits by Social Workers had further reduced and Social Worker staff continued to prioritise face-to-face interaction with children, young people and their families/carers.

Councillor Watson genuinely believed that there was plenty of evidence that Rotherham was a Child-Centred Borough.

In a supplementary question Councillor Albiston, whilst welcoming the detail, believed the actions were what she would expect from a functioning Local Authority delivering specialist services to children. She thanked staff who went above and beyond, but failed to see in the evidence with the capital culture work what difference things had made. With child poverty levels growing and youth provision shrinking what

evidence could be provided to prove Rotherham was a Child-Centred Borough.

Councillor Watson pointed out Rotherham was undertaking a significant number of actions that other local authorities were not doing. This was clearly evidenced in meetings with local authority colleagues and it was argued that the Year Ahead Plan focused on children.

Child poverty was a national issue and influenced by Government policies, especially around Child Benefit and Universal Credit.

(5) Councillor Cowles referred to Worcester Council having increased their share of council tax, £5m towards Social Service provision, this equated to a £33 increase for the average Band D household in the area, providing that other parts of the tax were not increased. He asked had the Council considered this approach to supporting Social Services?

Councillor Alam confirmed Worcester City Council was a District Council, with no Social Care responsibilities.

Worcestershire County Council, who did have Social Care responsibilities, was consulting on their 2021/22 budget proposals. They were proposing a 2.5% Council Tax increase (1.5% basic and 1.0% ASC precept). This would raise them £6.2M. Last year they increased the levy by 2% and the council tax by 1.99%, reportedly spending the money across Social Care and other Services.

That kind of combination of an increase in both Council Tax and the Social Care levy was the same approach that Rotherham took and Councils across the country have done the same thing.

Rotherham had invested significantly in Social Care Services in recent years. The current year's budget (2020/21), agreed at Council in February, 2020, included a Council Tax and Adult Social Care precept total increase of 2.99%. This was less than the increase in Worcestershire, but it raised an additional £3.2M income, so considerably less than the equivalent rise in Worcestershire would raise.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles indicated that if he was given a choice he would opt to supplement Social Care provision. In the current climate this got his vote every time, so asked if the Cabinet Member would look into the issue as to how much could be raised and provide him with the figure.

Councillor Alam confirmed if Rotherham raised Council Tax by 2.5% this would not raise the £6.2 m figure like Worcester. This would be less than £2.8 m and would depend on how many properties were in a specific banded area. However, he was happy to look into this further and provide the figures in writing.

(6) Councillor John Turner explained when he first joined the Council a significant number of Labour Councillors in the Chamber seemed to be sporting trade union badges. He asked did any of those receive any monetary sponsorship or assistance from those unions?

The Leader confirmed there was a legal requirement for any Member to ensure that any payment or provision of any other financial benefit was recorded in their register of interests and this included the receipt of any payment or financial benefit from a trade union.

In a supplementary question Councillor Turner believed this to be more of a regular allowance towards their expenses when taking on the job in the first place.

The Leader to his knowledge knew of no-one who received that regular income from a trade union, but pointed out that if it did occur this must be recorded in a Member's Register of Interest.

(7) Councillor Jones asked could the Cabinet Member explain what the purpose of a pre-planning application was and why there was an "air of secrecy" around them?

Councillor Lelliott explained the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2019) actively encouraged anyone considering applying for planning permission to enter into 'pre-application' discussions with the Planning Department as it offered significant potential to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system and improve the quality of planning applications. It would also identify, at an early stage, those schemes that were contrary to planning policy and likely to be refused. This was helpful to the applicant, the Council and the wider community.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones referred to 2 specific instances - one in relation to a petrol site to expand into flats where Ward colleagues had been advised not to share information with the public. The second one - RB2019/0968 was for the development of 3 x 5 storey blocks of flats on the Masbrough Chapel site. Development would require all the bodies to be exhumed and due to the history the site was of significant interest. He believed whilst the Local Authority had expressed some concerns, the development be positively viewed. He, therefore, asked if the Cabinet Member for Finance was aware of the £80k outstanding charge for clearance of the old chapel and whether as part of the weekly planning update these applications could also be included.

Councillor Lelliott asked Councillor Jones to share this information with her and she would discuss his concerns with the Planning Service and respond in writing. She did point out that the pre-application service was available to developers and full details were on the Council's website.

(8) Councillor Cusworth asked what preparations have the Council made for the winter weather and did the Council have sufficient salt stocks for a bad winter?

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed rock salt was stored in a purpose-built salt barn at Hellaby Depot. The barn held 4,500 tonnes of salt at the beginning of the season and a further 2,000 tonnes of rock salt was stored at Scotch Springs Depot near Maltby. That was a lot of salt and more than enough salt for a normal/bad winter. However, if required additional salt was procured during the season.

The service could be delivered 24 hours a day 7 days a week during the winter period to ensure the roads were kept safe. The Council had 40 qualified drivers working in shifts, with a Supervisor and a Winter Manager to support them.

The Council had 10 gritting routes, covering over 400 miles roads and more than 50% of the total road network. The routes prioritised roads that were important to the free flow of traffic i.e. main roads and other well used classified roads, bus routes, and access roads to hospitals and fire stations. When snowfall was expected and the main routes were clear, then action was taken to address estate roads, with the priorities for action being the areas where people were most at risk, i.e. sheltered housing, and footways near hospitals and schools. Available resources were distributed in accordance with the location of snowfall.

To give a sense of scale, following the recent snowfall events, the Highways Winter Service team have worked around the clock to keep roads safe and so far this year, over 1,000 tonnes of salt had been used.

The Council could also deploy hand salting teams to clear snow and ice from pedestrianised areas, footways and footpaths in town centres, older people centres, accesses to hospitals and steep gradients when conditions required. Teams from across Streetscene Services, including street cleaning and grounds maintenance staff supported this activity. The team also prioritised salting at the vaccination and Covid-19 testing sites.

(9) Councillor Jones asked was the mining of minerals for temporary or permanent use classed as permitted development and if so what were the restrictions?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed Part 17 of Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 set out the permitted development limitations for mining and mineral exploration. There were a multitude of mining operations allowed through Class A to Class M and a number of restrictions imposed but which were too lengthy and complex to describe here. The Legislation could be made available should it be required. Any development that did not comply with the

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

limitations of the permitted development allowances would require planning permission.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones confirmed he had read the Legislation and under permitted development material could be removed on a temporary basis and must be restored after the development was complete. He asked, therefore, why was Grange Landfill using agriculture land which was not in a planning permitted area for the purpose of storing sandstone for hardcore and compound base to reinstate a piece of land without appropriate planning permission. He asked would the Cabinet Member be pursuing an obvious breach of planning.

Councillor Lelliott explained if there was evidence that could be provided she was happy to meet with Planning and Enforcement Officers.

(10) Councillor Sansome asked did the Leader agree with him that despite 11 years of failed Tory Industrial policy and local mismanagement, the very recent announcement of investment at Liberty Rotherham, was the sign of light at the end of what has been a very painful road for our local steel industry?

The Leader confirmed this was excellent news that Liberty was investing £60M in Rotherham to double its steel output in the town to 1M tonnes a year. Production had already increased in Rotherham following a £20m investment in 2018 and new products have been launched – this further investment was testament to confidence in the future of steel making in Rotherham. It was not only good news in terms of the future for Liberty, but good news for the supply chain, jobs in the local area and the UK as a whole.

In a supplementary question Councillor Sansome referred to the policy from previous owners who reduced job numbers and production lines and asked if the Leader would join him in paying tribute to local community leaders, Members of Parliament, John Healey and Sarah Champion.

The Leader supported Councillor Sansome and was aware that work behind the scenes was enormous and sadly rarely made the news. There was a team of people working very hard to support Rotherham steel making industry and this was a step in the right direction.

(11) Councillor Cowles referred to an article in the paper, 'Costs shock for 19 pauper funerals'. It was his understanding that where possible costs were recovered from the estate of the deceased, otherwise the Council stood the cost. The article gave the impression cost recovery had simply been delayed, but as these were pauper funerals, surely cost recovery was less likely rather than likely?

Councillor Roche explained the eligibility for a public health funeral was not entirely based upon an ability to pay, those with no known next of kin, or no-one able/willing to take this responsibility were also eligible.

Therefore, estate claims could cover the whole cost and the Council's administrative fee.

The term 'pauper funeral' was misleading and could lead to assumptions that they were carried out based on an ability to pay.

Costs incurred by the Council varied each year for a variety of reasons. The number of funerals funded did not correlate to the level of income either, it was always dependent upon the individual situation and settlement of the person's estate.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles asked if there was a shortfall in the cost of the funerals surely this money could be transferred from the Dignity contract. He, therefore, suggested that any future negotiations with the company include this area and for cost recovery to be part of the contract funding.

Councillor Roche would discuss this with the Cabinet Member with responsibility, but point out it was a legal requirement that Public Health were responsible for these type of funerals. It was not clear whether funding could be reclaimed or not.

(12) Councillor Jones believed the Cabinet Member would be well aware that Grange Landfill's operating times were between 7.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. Monday to Friday so could the Cabinet Member explain how the Council planned to light the roadway for winter use to make it safe or was there any plans to alter that roadway?

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed Grange Landfill was not operating at this time and it was hoped they never would.

There were no plans for the Council to install lighting or to alter the access road to the Grange Landfill site and would not like to see the Council facilitate making access.

In a supplementary Councillor Jones pointed out that Millmoor Juniors were not the sole users of the access road as this was also a public footpath. If the roadway was to be lit or if it could not be achieved would the Cabinet Member ask the operators to restrict their operations to the hours of daylight.

Councillor Hoddinott explained the access road to Grange Landfill site was on land owned by the Council and the owner of the tip was granted a right of way over the land. The Council had a duty not to obstruct the use of the way, but it had no duty to maintain the access route in a useable condition. The access road was not part of the public adopted highway. The maintenance and safety of the road was, therefore, the responsibility of the users of the road and the operator had a legal duty to operate safely and to take steps to ensure the safety of others using the access road, such as Millmoor Juniors Football Club.

Any breach of safety by the operator on the road would be regulated by the Health and Safety Executive, and any breaches or concerns that have been reported have been passed on to them for investigation. It was understood that, following an investigation in late 2019 recommendations were made. Any breaches of these agreed safety measures would be reported to the Health and Safety Executive.

(13) Councillor Carter asked how many businesses that were registered at a sole trader's home address had applied for the Additional Restrictions Grant?

Councillor Alam confirmed that 30 applications had been received to date from sole traders running their business from home.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked how was that in comparison to other Councils in the area.

Councillor Alam confirmed no benchmarking had been undertaken, but 9 businesses had been paid £500 each via the Council's discretionary scheme, with a total grant value of £4,500.

Six were being processed, with the remaining 15 currently rejected, though all rejections cases were kept open allowing the applicant to provide further supporting evidence.

(14) Councillor Carter asked how many businesses that were registered at a sole trader's home address had received the funding for the Additional Restrictions Grant, how much had been given out and what reasons had unsuccessful businesses been given for being denied the funding?

Councillor Alam explained 30 applications had been received to date from sole traders running their business from home.

Nine have been paid £500 each via the Council's discretionary scheme, total grant value of £4,500 and 6 were being processed.

Fifteen had not yet provided the necessary evidence to allow payment.

Rejections so far have been due to lack of supporting evidence provided with the claim. In these cases the Council had informed the businesses what needed to be provided to enable the claim to be considered.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked for more detail to be given so that residents were aware what sort of evidence was required to get this grant, how this could be demonstrated and what supporting evidence was acceptable.

Councillor Alam explained by way of example in relation to these particular types of applications, businesses must be able to:-

- demonstrate financial hardship which was believed to relate to Covid-19 and/or the resulting Government-imposed restrictions on economic activity, either directly or indirectly. For this the Council require evidence of a fall in income by providing one of the following:
 - comparative sales figures for impacted and non-impacted months
 - bank statements showing fall in sales income
 - sales ledgers
 - booking/order documents.

- evidence significant ongoing business costs such as:
 - bank statements showing the payment of fixed costs
 - invoices for rental or lease of services/equipment/goods
 - invoices for professional licenses/memberships
 - evidence of significant premises costs that are business related (for example utility bills in relation to an extension on a property that is solely for business use).

(15) Councillor B. Cutts confirmed that in 2020 in Rotherham the Borough had lost through demolition 2 legally protected Listed Buildings so asked when was it expected the original Maltby Grammar School to be demolished?

Councillor Lelliott explained the Council had not approved the full demolition of any legally protected Listed Buildings within the last 12 months. Where partial demolitions had happened these had been to later additions to the buildings, thus protecting the special character of the Listed Buildings.

The Old Maltby Grammar School building was not a legally Listed protected Building. Maltby Academy Trust were developing plans to remodel part of the building which would involve partial demolition with the remainder of the building being refurbished.

No buildings had been built on the football pitches/sports fields at Maltby Academy.

In a supplementary question Councillor B. Cutts referred to Listed Buildings being leased onto another person without advising them they were Listed Buildings as an excuse to getting them demolished and he queried how many of these demolitions resulted in extensions on sports fields.

A response was to be provided in writing, but in consultation with Councillor B. Cutts a written response was not required.

(16) Councillor Brookes referred to the ECO scheme which mandated Councils to engage with energy suppliers to ensure that private residents with low income/particular vulnerability to the cold such as sufferers of COPD, could benefit from free installation of efficient heating. She asked for an update on how the scheme was progressing and how residents could benefit before March, 2022?

Councillor Beck confirmed the Energy Company Obligation ECO3 scheme commenced in December, 2018 and would run until 31st March, 2022.

The Council engaged with the scheme from its outset and published a statement of intent on its website.

In 2019, 7 installers were engaged completing 587 measures.

In 2020, 15 installers were engaged, who were able to cover a wide range of ECO measures including loft and cavity wall insulation, room in the roof insulation, underfloor insulation as well as boiler installations. A number of the companies were South Yorkshire based, providing much needed employment in the area. Despite lockdowns as a result of Covid-19 the 15 installers had carried out 2,151 measures, with 2,110 being boiler replacements, often supplemented with an additional measure of underfloor insulation. Additionally, there were over 500 cavity wall insulation installations and over 300 roof insulations.

In 2021 there have been 39 measures installed 3 being wall insulation and the rest boiler replacements.

In a supplementary question Councillor Brookes asked, given the much higher number of people than national average with COPD and effects of the coronavirus, would the Cabinet Member give an extra push in the current year to ensure this great scheme was utilised as it was there to help vulnerable people.

Councillor Beck 100% concurred with Councillor Brookes. He explained that initially there was an issue with the suppliers having to be registered with the scheme. He would be discussing this with the Director of Housing on how this scheme could be promoted further before it came to an end next year.

(17) Councillor Cowles asked for confirmation that only 0.08 hectares of the 0.24 hectares or the old Primark site in the town centre were proposed to be used as the new green space and was the remaining area away from the High Street set to remain closed and unused?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed the scheme would comprise 0.08 hectares of new green space on the 0.24 hectare site. The green space, which would be on the frontage of the former Primark site, was intended as a temporary use and there would be a pocket park pending a comprehensive redevelopment of the site as a longer term plan.

The remaining elements of the site were to be cleared and remediated and left as brownfield land, significantly enhancing the viability of this site, ready for a future redevelopment. This area would be mostly screened from view and be secured with no public access for health and safety reasons due to the level changes present on the site. The scheme also included an 'opening up' of Snail Hill.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles referred to the planning statement which included 3 food, and at the rear of the green space, waste bins which could attract vermin. This was not a project looking for funding, but money looking for a project and this was taxpayers money that should not be wasted.

This temporary scheme had a maximum life of 5 years yet it was not part of the overall masterplan and the building not one identified for demolition. He asked why was this building identified, the overall cost (including the cost of the building, land and development of green space) and how much would be written off after 5 years.

Councillor Lelliott pointed out there were people asking for action on the Primark building even as a temporary measure and there were some dissents on when schemes should and should not be developed.

Despite the dissents from some the Cabinet Member was confident in the development of the Primark site and believed it reach its fruition.

Councillor Lelliott took the opportunity to highlight some of the developments already in the town centre including:-

- £10.5m University Centre Rotherham Campus.
- A £12m upgrade and refurbishment of Rotherham Interchange.
- A partner selected and planning permission secured for key development at Forge Island.
- Essential flood defence and enabling infrastructure completed on Forge Island.
- Completion of a fish pass allowing the return of salmon migrating to their traditional spawning grounds upstream of Rotherham.
- Construction underway of 171 new homes at Wellgate Place, Westgate Riverside and Millfold Rise.
- Improvements to public realm – starting on Bridgegate which was now nearing completion – other schemes to follow.
- Private investment underway – Conversion of 6 buildings to create 62 new homes in the Georgian grade II listed Westgate Chambers and the conversion of the historic George Wright Building into Rotherham's first boutique hotel (also Grade II listed).
- Successful Future High Street Fund Bid.

This gave developers the confidence to invest in Rotherham.

(18) Councillor Carter asked with home working more prevalent and the stay at home order in force, what plans did the Council have to support residents who were at risk of fuel poverty because they were being advised to isolate, but did not qualify for Winter Fuel payments?

Councillor Alam confirmed the Council had earmarked £250k of Covid Winter Grant Scheme Funding to support residents struggling with utility costs and debt. This scheme was detailed within the Covid Winter Grant Cabinet report, approved on 10th December, 2020.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked while the grant was welcome, how far would this spread over this period of time throughout the Borough and how was this going to be publicised to make sure residents knew about it. This was a real issue for some residents moving forward with working from home and having extra utility costs.

Councillor Alam confirmed work was taking place with the community sector and the community hub. The Leader had also issued a number of press statements to engage residents in looking at this support mechanism and through the debt and appeals process. Central Government was being encouraged to look at this national issue when some people were having to decide whether to eat or heat their property and the Leader was actively liaising through the City Region with Ministers on how to support food poverty.

(19) Councillor M. Elliott explained following his recent re-subscription to the brown bin service, he had received last year's bin sticker and calendar, closely followed by an e-mail informing him to ignore it with the 2021/2022 information being posted out in March. He asked if this had been a Borough-wide error?

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed this was not a Borough-wide error and affected only a small number of properties.

In the first week of January the service identified around 90 properties who had received last year's bin sticker in error, after subscribing for the 2021 to 2022 Garden Waste Collection Scheme. As soon as officers identified the mistake the residents who were affected were contacted immediately.

(20) Councillor B. Cutts asked if a local list of heritage assets had yet been completed as it was last stated being underway in 2018?

Councillor Lelliott explained the Council recognised the benefits of a local list of heritage assets and the support this had from local bodies, such as the Rotherham Civic Society, and there was a commitment to do this work. As a first step, the priority work in relation to heritage had been the Buildings at Risk Strategy and Register, and this had been the primary focus to date. The Buildings at Risk Strategy and Register was programmed to seek Cabinet approval in Autumn this year, following

which work would commence on the production of a local list of heritage assets. This detail would also be sent in writing.

(21) Councillor Jones referred to how in several meetings the Cabinet Member had stated that the GLL Site was unique, the only one of its kind and the Council had a good working relationship with the Environment Agency. He asked did the Cabinet Member still stand by those statements?

Councillor Hoddinott explained the Council was opposed to this landfill site and that since the Council unanimously passed a motion in January, 2017, to ask the Environment Agency to revoke the Environmental Permit for Grange Landfill site, every possible avenue had been explored to prevent the site from reopening.

That had included making significant representations to the Environment Agency and to the Secretary of State, to support the Council to prevent significant impacts on local people or the wider environment should the site begin to accept waste again.

The nature of the Planning Permission that was in place for the site dating from 1958, a time well before proper regulation of landfill sites was in place, and prior to the development of residential and leisure activities in the local area. The historic planning permission had very few restrictions, conditions or controls within it, and even though the permission was very old and took no account of the current environment around the site, the Council had no legal powers to insist that the operator applied for new planning permission.

Officers had searched across the country for sites of a similar nature and had not found any others that were in a similar situation. It was, therefore, believe that this situation was unique and should be dealt with as a special case by the Secretary of State.

With that in mind the Council had made multiple written representations to the Secretary of State asking for intervention in these exceptional circumstances. To date the Secretary of State had declined to intervene.

The Council was required to maintain working relationships with the Environment Agency and working in partnership across a whole range of environmental and regulatory matters. Whilst robust representations have been made to the Environment Agency in terms of Grange Landfill site, Officers had maintained professional relationships at all times.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones referred to evidence the Action Group had in their possession that this site was not unique and that the Environment Agency had been re-permitting another site if not more. The exact number of sites was subject to a Freedom of Information request. In corresponding with the Environment Agency they were advising a consultancy for the site owner on steps to take to re-permit the

site considering these new revelations. He asked did the Cabinet Member still feel the partnership was as open and transparent as the Environment Agency was treating the Council as fools as they had the public.

Councillor Hoddinott had not seen the information that Councilor Jones had. The site was still regarded as unique and the circumstances required intervention, but the Cabinet Member stood by the relationship with the Environment Agency and that a professional relationship would be maintained. She still did not agree the Environment Agency should have permitted this site.

(22) Councillor John Turner referred to it previously being the professional practice for the Council to publish the curriculum vitae of serving Councillors and asked if this practice had been stopped?

The Leader could not recall this ever being the case and there was no current requirement for a Councillor to specifically publish a curriculum vitae in relation to their affairs as a Councillor.

All the required personal information relating to a Councillor, that one might expect to be made available through a document such as a CV, was available on the Councillor's pages on the Council's website.

In a supplementary question Councillor Turner historically believed it was required at that time that Councillors published their CV to display worthiness to take up a position of Councillor. He did not know why this practice was stopped.

The Leader was unable to give any further information.

(23) Councillor Jones indicated that considering the botched, covert investigation into the Borehole fiasco at Droppingwell, could the Cabinet Member explain the agreement that was made in 2017 between the Council and the site owner not to prosecute them for trespass onto Council land including the large scale damage to the site.

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed there was no record of any agreement between the Council and Grange Landfill Ltd in terms of any matters relating to trespass or damage to Council land in 2017.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones referred to a report the operator claimed to have entered the site in April 2017 and October 2019 and reinstated the same borehole BH5 after being told not to drill on public land. He asked why had the Council not pursued action for trespass and further damage to the site.

Councillor Hoddinott explained that where there had been trespass the Council had issued warnings to Grange Landfill. Last year steps were taken so that Grange Landfill could not damage the green space with a

turning circle and the Council had put a gate and barriers to prevent further damage.

(24) Councillor Carter asked due to the current lockdown and school closures, what work had the Council undertaken to identify pupils without laptops, tablets, and adequate internet at home to allow them to fully participate in schoolwork remotely.

Councillor Watson explained the Covid-19 pandemic had highlighted a distinct level of digital poverty across disadvantaged communities across the UK and the recent move to remote learning in schools as part of the national lockdown may enhance this further for a number of students/families in Rotherham. RMBC had raised this issue as a key area needing additional support for Rotherham students with both the DfE and Regional Schools Commissioner and further resources were being sought to be cascaded to schools to minimise the impact on students.

In May 2020, the Local Authority worked with schools, Virtual School, Social Care Services and other stakeholders to identify 990 children who met the DfE criteria for issue of a laptop/tablet/access to the internet via a portable device. All 990 laptops/tablets were received in June, 2020 and had all been distributed to the schools the children attended along with any portable devices required to secure internet access. By July, 2020 all these devices had been configured to school networks and systems and had been distributed to the identified children.

Following the roll out of these devices in phase 1, a further phase was introduced by DfE which invited schools directly to identify additional pupils who would benefit from a laptop/tablet to support remote learning. The Local Authority enhanced the communication around this and encouraged schools to make use of this offer. Most schools identified additional children who would benefit, and the majority had received the additional devices, a few schools were reporting that devices were outstanding and DfE have advised deliveries were imminent.

A further round had now been introduced open to secondary phased education and would shortly be available to primary phased education to submit applications for additional resources.

Should a child not have appropriate IT access they fell under the guidance of critical/vulnerable workers and had a legal right to access education across the national lockdown. This was also applicable should a child not have an appropriate learning space in their own home, if this criterion was met, they could also legally access education in schools. Should isolated cases of children who needed IT be brought to the attention of Council Officers these were followed up with the respective school.

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter pointed out that whilst most students were getting laptops some were still outstanding meaning students were entitled to go into school to ensure they could access education. He asked, therefore, how many students were taking up the offer to go into school, how many schools were responding to this and facilitating normal learning or facilitating provision similar to initial lockdown in March and when could it be expected that all these children who needed the text support delivery to access education. It was a worry that children could be in a disadvantaged household and end up missing out on valuable learning which could be detrimental.

Councillor Watson could not give exact numbers on who had not received a device so would need to get back to Councillor Carter on this as this was facilitated through schools not the Council.

Schools were coping well, but some teachers struggling at the moment as there were more children attending school than in the initial lockdown. Some schools were operating at 70% capacity which meant it may be impossible to operate social distancing. However, the majority were doing a tremendous job of delivering real and virtual lessons. Once more exact details were known these would be sent through to Councillor Carter.

(25) Councillor Albiston asked how many children and young people did not have the necessary equipment to participate in remote learning, e.g. laptops and access to the internet?

Councillor Watson could not give a definite number, but gave his assurance that schools had worked hard to minimise this issue in recent months and as outlined in response to the previous question. In addition to the new stocks of devices issued under the DfE scheme, schools had their own stocks of laptops/tablets for IT lessons in schools, so these were also currently being utilised where necessary and appropriate to enhance the remote learning offer for pupils at this present time. Should isolated cases be brought to the attention of Council Officers these were followed up with the respective school.

However, the presence of IT access/online/remote learning mechanisms could be confirmed as being in place from 59 IMTs since September where schools were asked to provide evidence of IT access and remote learning for students in self-isolation (which also included several larger Trusts – so it was clear that there was broadly a mechanism in place across the Borough) and examples of exceptional practice e.g. Flanderwell/St Alban's (DSAT) model/WPT model/White Woods model/JMAT model. School leaders had committed to sharing examples of good practice in collaboration with other schools which have been cascaded through schools' updates. Where schools had identified issues with not having appropriate IT, the Council escalated to DfE to seek support to make sure schools got support with additional IT needed in the shortest possible timescales.

In a supplementary question Councillor Albiston was concerned about how children with SEN had access to IT equipment to participate in remote learning at home, how they would meet the criteria and how could a recovery strategy be developed around children going forward if the Council had no idea of the number of children who did not have access to educational equipment to support their education.

Councillor Watson pointed out every effort was made to identify those students in need with support through Social Care and Early Help. If a student was identified under the guidance as vulnerable and had a right to access school, this needed to be balanced under the current restrictions. From information provided by the academy chains children had been identified that needed devices and some were still outstanding. However, everyone involved was striving to ensure everyone was picked up.

Question 26 would be responded to in writing as Councillor Cowles was not in attendance.

(27) Councillor B. Cutts asked had there been any further consideration given to the Standards Board meetings being webcasted?

The Leader explained whilst there was no Legislation that indicated the Standards Board meetings must be held in private there was an underlying necessity for all personal and exempt information to be received and heard in private and the Council needed to ensure any witnesses at meetings could be assured that the Council was respecting these principles.

This had been subject to discussion at the Constitution Working Group as the Monitoring Officer had advised that given witnesses and Members who were subject to complaints may provide sensitive/personal information etc. it would not be advisable to hold these meetings in public.

In a supplementary question Councillor B. Cutts emphasized the importance of recording these meetings and the anomaly of not doing so and asked why there was no further progress on this.

The Leader confirmed there were no proposals to ensure Standards Board hearings were webcast and there were no plans to change the current arrangements.

(28) Councillor Jones referred to one of the Environment Agency's recommendations from the report was for the operator to ask RMBC for permission to re-drill a new borehole to replace the one alleged to have been vandalised by members of the public on Council land. He asked would the Cabinet Member be giving this permission and if so why?

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

Councillor Hoddinott explained the Council had not received a request for permission to place a borehole on Council land from the operator, so no decision had been made. She would be happy to hear his view on what the decision should be.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones pointed out it was his belief that to drill a hole without asking permission was illegal and would be trespass and from his point of view the Council should not be giving the permission. He believed the Council needed to bear this in mind and inform the Environment Agency that the site must operate within safety limits. The borehole had been removed at the lowest point of the site with the most contaminates and if the Council believed it should give permission for this borehole to be reinstated, it was asked that the Council consult with all the patrons of the site including the Action Group, football club and people who walked through the park. It was important that the Council took a stance on this.

Councillor Hoddinott appreciated this would be a difficult decision and took points on board.

(29) Councillor Napper made reference to the residents who lived in bungalow complexes with community centres and paying for the use and upkeep but being unable to use them due to the pandemic. He asked would these residents be compensated in some way for not being able to use them while still paying for the upkeep?

Councillor Beck explained the Council did not expect tenants to pay for neighbourhood centres when they were unable to use them through no fault of their own. Therefore, for those tenants who ordinarily directly paid the communal facility charge for neighbourhood centres, the Council had arranged for the charge to be credited to their rent account, in effect refunded in full. This would continue until such time that the centres could be re-opened safely.

In a supplementary question Councillor Napper referred to residents whose homes were heated via the district centres like the one at Elizabeth Park where residents had been without heating for a month.

Councillor Beck confirmed he would take this issue up separately with Councillor Napper.

(30) Councillor Jones referred to it being suggested that to comply with HSE legislation around the use of the access road, Millmoor Juniors would have to give up some of their 24/7/365 access rights to the site, to allow lorries access to the site. He asked what was the outcome of this discussion?

Councillor Hoddinott explained neither Council Officers, nor herself, have any knowledge of the suggestion that Millmoor Juniors would have to give up any of their access rights in order to allow vehicles to access the Grange Landfill site.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones asked for a point of information about the Council holding discussions and whether the Cabinet Member would ask other patrons of other parks to give up their privilege of access to line pockets of a private business and asked if this would be challenged.

Councillor Hoddinott was as frustrated as Councillor Jones about time and effort put in find ways to stop this tip from happening. Neither the Action Group or the Council had been able to stop it so far after years of trying. The Cabinet Member still believed the Council should plead a special unique case and had asked the Secretary of State to stop the tip and would continue to press the case. With the environmental protections and operating hours safety concerns not being regulated through the old planning permission, the Council found this a ludicrous situation which was why the Government were being asked to use their power to intervene.

(31) Councillor Cusworth asked how was the Council working with Rotherham schools to ensure vulnerable children and children of key workers could attend school when needed?

The Deputy Leader confirmed the Council had facilitated a series of well attended 'Teams' sessions for school leaders during the first week of term in relation to the rapidly changing situation and evolving DfE guidance and the expectations on schools. These sessions have been well received by schools as a supportive system and would be run on a regular basis.

A regular communications process had been established since March, 2020 to ensure schools were kept up-to-date with evolving guidance.

The Council was monitoring the position in relation to attendance of vulnerable children and working with schools/settings to ensure the most appropriate arrangements were in place in relation to individual children who were classed as vulnerable.

Schools were fully aware of the wider categorisation of critical workers and were working hard to ensure as many requests as possible to attend school were accommodated. There were several points of clarity that schools required and it was anticipated that once DfE clarity was provided that specific points would be clear.

Where individual cases of a child not being able to access a school place were alerted to the Local Authority, Officers would contact the respective school leaders in an attempt to resolve.

The provision of “Home to School” transport arrangements remained stable and available vehicle, driver and passenger assistant resources had not been impacted. The Service was currently maintaining an uninterrupted bus/taxi routing schedule and were responding to requirements that were communicated to the Service.

To maintain attendance levels, Home to School transport workers coming into contact with Service users, would be encouraged to use the lateral flow Covid testing facility to minimise the risk of further spread, in line with the roll out of mass testing in schools.

(32) Councillor Albiston asked given children and young people had and would be disproportionately affected by the pandemic (across health, education, poverty etc.), what immediate and longer term plan had the Council got to mitigate these impacts?

Councillor Watson explained throughout the pandemic Children and Young People’s Services had worked closely with partners from Health, Education and the Voluntary Sector to deliver services to children, young people and families that would help to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on children and young people.

The effectiveness of the work in Rotherham was externally scrutinised by Ofsted when they undertook a monitoring visit in October 2020. The findings of the focused inspection visit were summarised in a letter which was published on the Ofsted website. The letter was positive in respect of the work undertaken by the service and highlighted that *Rotherham Children’s Services reacted rapidly and effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic in the early months of 2020*. The letter further notes that *strong and effective multi-agency partnerships enabled the early identification of vulnerable children. Senior leaders, managers and staff have effective oversight of children and young people who need to be safeguarded and supported*.

Government policy was that vulnerable children should continue to attend school during wider education closures; this policy was being supported by education providers across the Borough and school attendance was encouraged by the Social Care, Early Help and Inclusion workforce who were supporting families. As with the 2020 lockdown, the new national lockdown would limit the access to education for a large number of children and young people with an impact on the wider holistic support and social interaction that supported children’s wellbeing. Schools were supporting all children and young people through delivery of a virtual offer and targeted outreach support to the most vulnerable children who were not in school; this included the provision of food or vouchers to families entitled to Free School Meals.

Children and Young People’s Services delivered the *Wellbeing for Education Return* programme during the autumn term through a joined up approach with partners; the training and support package was well

received by attendees and further cascaded to the school workforce. Feedback was that colleagues appreciated the focus on staff wellbeing with a recognition that resilient staff were best able to support children to be resilient. The Council had worked closely with schools throughout the pandemic and there was consensus that the Rotherham Covid education response was a key priority for the Rotherham Strategic Education Partnership (RESP).

At the current time, using data from 1st April to 30th November, referrals to Early Help and Social Care were not significantly higher than this time last year. Due to the pandemic there was significant gap in education data for 2020. Children and Young People's Services monitored available performance data monthly and had worked collaboratively with the Department of Education throughout the pandemic and would continue to do so in order that services could be mobilised quickly in response to any emerging local or national concerns.

In a supplementary question Councillor Albiston asked would the Deputy Leader commit to the development of a child anti-poverty strategy and if not why not.

Councillor Watson agreed he would.

(33) Councillor Cusworth asked how important had partnership working been for the Council, and how well had it worked in helping RMBC deal with the Covid-19 pandemic?

Councillor Roche confirmed the role of partners and the harnessing the positive sense of place and collective spirit to combat the pandemic had been key to supporting the Council's response thus far.

The Council had worked hard in engaging partners and had strengthened links to the situation. The Local Government Association recognised the work of Rotherham's Health and Wellbeing Board and used its partnership working as an example of good practice.

The role of the voluntary sector had been crucial in supporting communities, the creation of the Rotherham heroes had supported the Community Hub offer for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people and VAR/REMA have helped shape the response alongside statutory partners. From military planners supporting the creation of testing stations, to pharmacists responding to the flu vaccination approach to mitigate the impacts of winter, all public bodies have stepped up to the plate and done their bit for Rotherham. The strong foundations built over the preceding few years to build effective partnerships had paid dividends, from the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotherham Together Partnership to the Rotherham Health and Social Care Integrated Care Partnership, all organisations have come together to support the Borough.

COUNCIL MEETING - 13/01/21

Work was ongoing to support businesses impacted through the lockdown via grants and the Health and Social Care system was working closely to distribute the vaccination programme which would be key to supporting the recovery effort. Work was also taking place with national partners like Age Concern and others.

445. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.