

**COUNCIL MEETING**  
**26th May, 2021**

Present:- Councillors Alam, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Aveyard, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bird, Brookes, Browne, Burnett, A Carter, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clark, Collingham, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, R. Elliott, Ellis, Fisher, Griffin, Hague, Haleem, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McClure, McNeely, Mills, Monk, Miro, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Roche, Sansome, Sheppard, Singleton, Sylvester, Thompson, Tinsley, Whomersley, Wilson, Wooding, Wyatt and Yasseen.

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

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

Councillor Keenan took the Chair for this item.

To elect a Mayor and Chair of the Council for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

Two nominations had been received: -

“That Councillor Jenny Andrews be elected Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that she be entitled to the style of Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Proposer:- Councillor Roche

Secunder:- Councillor Pitchley

“That Councillor Ian Jones be elected Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Proposer:- Councillor Elliott

Secunder:- Councillor Barley

On being put to the vote the motion to elect Councillor Jones as Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 was declared as lost.

On being put to the vote the motion to elect Councillor Andrews as Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that she be entitled to the style of Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 was declared as won.

Councillor Sylvester asked for his vote against the motion to elect Councillor Andrews as Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year to be recorded.

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 26/05/21**

Councillor Andrews thereupon made and subscribed the statutory declaration of acceptance of office.

**Resolved:** - That Councillor Jenny Andrews be elected Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that she be entitled to the style of Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

(Councillor Andrews assumed the Chair)

### **2. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the first meeting of Council of the new Municipal Year and to the first meeting of Council to be held at Magna.

The Mayor congratulated and welcomed all the newly Elected Members to their first Council meeting and noted how she was looking forward to working with them over the coming year.

The Mayor referred to the following Mayoral Engagements:

- Conveying the Freedom of the Borough on Dame Julie Kenny at an Extraordinary Council meeting on 19th March.
- Attending the opening the Hope Fields Memorial Garden.
- Attending a memorial service with the Mayoress for HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at Sheffield Cathedral.
- Opening a new craft beer shop in Maltby.

The Mayor thanked the Mayoress and the Deputy Mayor for their support over the last year.

### **3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

To elect a Deputy Mayor and Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

Two nominations had been received: -

“That Councillor Tajamal Khan be elected Vice-Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Proposer:- Councillor Cooksey

Seconder:- Councillor Beck

“That Councillor Tracey Wilson be elected Vice-Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that she be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Proposer:– Councillor Barley

Secunder:– Councillor Elliott

On being put to the vote the motion to elect Councillor Wilson as Vice-Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that she be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 was declared as lost.

On being put to the vote the motion to elect Councillor Khan as Vice-Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 was declared as won.

Councillor Khan thereupon made and subscribed the statutory declaration of acceptance of office.

**Resolved:** - That Councillor Tajamal Khan be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**4. APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR'S CADETS**

The Mayor advised that the appointment of the Mayor's Cadets would be confirmed at the next meeting of Council on 21st July, 2021.

**5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Austin and Barker.

**6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**7. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no communications.

**8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**

Councillor Jones requested that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th March, 2021 be checked as he had withdrawn the questions that he had submitted for Cabinet Members in advance of the meeting.

**Resolved:** - That the minutes of the meetings of Council held on 3rd, 10th and 19th March, 2021, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Allen

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

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

**10. ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**Resolved:** -

That in accordance with the requirements detailed in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, that Councillor Chris Read be appointed as Executive Leader of the Council for the period 2021–24.

Mover: - Councillor Allen

Seconder: - Councillor Griffin

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

In welcoming everyone to the meeting the Leader thanked colleagues for their support as the new municipal term began.

The Leader congratulated the Mayor on her re-appointment, and to Councillor Khan on his appointment as Deputy Mayor. The Leader also congratulated all the new Members of the Council from all parties and parts of the Borough who were taking their seats for the first time.

The Leader noted that for the second election in a row, the majority of Councillors elected were new into role and welcomed their enthusiasm and commitment stating than anyone who stood for election put their head above the parapet, and that in an age where politicians were often reviled and open to abuse, it was important to him that everyone started by respecting the commitment to public service and the personal sacrifices that people had made and would continue to make as everyone sought the best for the people that they represented.

The Leader advised that the presence of so many new Members should also serve as a reminder that it was essential not to simply accept the old way of doing things, and that everyone must always be on the right side of change. The Leader stated that all Elected Members must also continue to uphold high standards and be on the side of doing things the right way. The Leader continued that he hoped and believed that change would be one of the discussions that lay ahead for all present through the next few months.

The Leader advised that competitive elections were a good thing, and that whilst he may have liked the recent elections to be a little more favourable

to his side and a little less favourable to the Members opposite, no one should lose sight of that fact that everyone was only present at the meeting because the public had chosen and that everyone must continue to earn their trust. The Leader advised that he welcomed a difference of opinion and stated that a healthy debate was a good thing noting that he looked forward to working constructively with those on all sides of the Chamber.

The Leader stated that the Labour Group had been elected on a clear mandate and had heard a lot what the public said at the last election. The Leader stated that the administration would set out in more detail than ever before their plan to Build a Better Borough and noted that it was their responsibility to implement that plan as they had promised.

The Leader continued that this would mean that the administration would continue to pursue jobs and expanding economic opportunities for residents, provide more Council homes and affordable housing, continue to invest in and reform Social Care provision to meet the needs and aspirations of service users as well as renewing their commitment to ensure no-one was left behind because at a time when people were being driven apart, by poverty, by rising hate crime, by an economy that fails too many people and a political climate that thrives on division, the Council's role must be to secure a home that residents can be proud of and a platform upon which they can stand and fulfil their ambitions.

The Leader confirmed the Cabinet appointments that he had made: -

Councillor Sarah Allen, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working

Councillor Victoria Cusworth, Children and Young People

Councillor David Roche, Adult Social Care and Health

Councillor Denise Lelliott, Jobs and the Local Economy

Councillor Dominic Beck, Transport and Environment

Councillor Dave Sheppard, Social Inclusion

Councillor Amy Brookes, Housing

Councillor Saghir Alam, Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance

The Leader stated that he would like to take the opportunity to personally thank Councillor Emma Hoddinott for her contribution and commitment in Cabinet and wished her well in her new job. The Leader made of a special mention to former Councillor Gordon Watson, who had done so much to transform the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people in the Borough. The Leader stated that when he and former Councillor Watson attended their first meeting as Leader and Deputy, that he had touched his arm just before the meeting started and had said; "Hey, just think, we're here."

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 26/05/21**

The Leader concluded in stating that in that same spirit, to all Members taking their seats today – before the politics starts and the casework overloads inboxes and social media gets the better of you, remember: you're here and that you're doing a remarkable thing.

Councillor Barley thanked the Leader for his kind words of welcome and asked what he would look to do differently now that the composition of the Council was very different to how it had been before the election.

Councillor Sylvester asked whether the Leader would consider linking the size of Members' neighbourhood budgets to the level of deprivation in Wards.

In response to Councillor Barley the Leader advised that there were strong processes in place that not only enable agreement and disagreement to take place, but for accountable decision making to take place. The Leader advised he was always open to reviewing processes and procedures as required.

In response to Councillor Sylvester the Leader that the vast majority of the Council's spending activity was aimed at addressing the problems of inequality and deprivation by addressing market failures. The Leader advised that it would be wrong and misleading to pretend that the small neighbourhood budgets would address major issues such as inequality and deprivation but assured Councillor Sylvester that the Council's wider policies and actions would address these issues.

### **12. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING**

#### **Resolved: -**

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22nd March, 2021, be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Allen

### **13. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER - BOROUGH ELECTION RESULTS**

The Returning Officer submitted a report that detailed the results of the Borough Council Elections that had been held on Thursday, 6th May, 2021.

In moving the report Councillor Alam noted his thanks to the Returning Officer, the Elections Team and all of staff who had ensured the smooth running of the election process. In seconding the report Councillor Allen noted how she was looking forward to working with both new and returning Members in her role leading on member development.

**Resolved:** - That the report be noted.

Mover:- Councillor Alam

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

**14. DINNINGTON ST JOHN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUM**

Consideration was given to a report that had been submitted seeking approval for the Dinnington St John's Neighbourhood Development Plan to be adopted as part of the Statutory Development Plan for Rotherham Borough after the proposed plan had been supported in a referendum held on Thursday, 6th May, 2021.

It was noted that the Localism Act (2011) allowed for local communities to prepare plans and strategies for development in their area called Neighbourhood Plans that had given parish councils and local communities the power to write their own plans and to take more control of planning policy for their areas.

**Resolved:** -

- 1) That the outcome of the Dinnington St. John's Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, as set out at paragraph 1.5 of the officer's report be noted.
- 2) That the Dinnington St John's Neighbourhood Development Plan be adopted as part of the Statutory Development Plan for Rotherham Borough.

Mover:- Councillor Allen

Seconder:- Councillor Lelliott

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

Consideration was given to a report that detailed the membership of Political Groups on the Council, political balance and the entitlement to seats on, and the proposed appointments to Committees, Boards and Panels.

It was noted that Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 placed a duty on local authorities to set out the principles to be followed when allocating seats to political groups and for these principles to be followed when determining such allocation following formal notification of the establishment of political groups in operation on the Council. It was noted further that there was a requirement on local authorities to annually review the entitlement of the political groups to seats on the committees of the council.

## COUNCIL MEETING - 26/05/21

The report stated that the allocation of seats must follow 2 principles:

- a) Balance must be achieved across the total number of available seats on Committees; and
- b) Balance must be achieved on each individual Committee or body where seats are available.

The report stated that there were presently 4 political groups in operation on the Council – the Labour Group (majority), Conservative Group (opposition), Liberal Democrat (LibDem) Group and Rotherham Democratic Party (RDP) Group – with one non-aligned Councillor (members who are not in a political group).

It was noted further that there were 149 seats available on Committees, Boards and Panels, and under the calculation the Labour Group was entitled to 82 seats, the opposition Group 51 seats, the LibDem Group 7 seats, the RDP Group 7 seats. Two seats had been allocated to the one non-aligned Councillor.

Councillor Sylvester requested that his vote against the recommendation on the appointment of Members to Committees, Boards and Panels, and the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs be recorded.

### **Resolved: -**

- 1) That the operation of 4 political groups on the Council and the detail of their designated Leaders, as detailed below be noted:
  - a. **Labour Group** – Councillor Chris Read (Leader of the Majority Group)
  - b. **Conservative Group** – Councillor Emily Barley (Leader of the Majority Opposition Group)
  - c. **Liberal Democrat Group** – Councillor Adam Carter (Group Leader)
  - d. **Rotherham Democratic Party Group** – Councillor Rob Elliott (Group Leader)
- 2) That the entitlement of seats of the membership of the political groups, as detailed in the officer's report be approved, and that such entitlements be reflected in Council's appointments of Members to Committees.

- 3) That the Leader's appointments to Cabinet, as detailed below be noted.

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working** – Councillor Allen

**Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health** – Councillor Roche

**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People** – Councillor Cusworth

**Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance** – Councillor Alam

**Cabinet Member for Housing** – Councillor Brookes

**Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy** – Councillor Lelliott

**Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion** – Councillor Sheppard

**Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment** – Councillor Beck

- 4) That the appointment of Members to Committees, Boards and Panels, and the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs, as set out below, be approved.

**Audit Committee**

**Councillor Baker-Rogers (Chair)**  
**Councillor Hoddinott (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Barley  
Councillor Wilson  
Councillor Wyatt

**Licensing Board**

**Councillor Ellis (Chair)**  
**Councillor Hughes (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Bacon  
Councillor Baker-Rogers  
Councillor Ball  
Councillor Barker  
Councillor Browne  
Councillor Clark  
Councillor Cowen

## COUNCIL MEETING - 26/05/21

Councillor Griffin  
Councillor Jones  
Councillor McNeely  
Councillor Mills  
Councillor Pitchley  
Councillor Reynolds  
Councillor Sansome  
Councillor Singleton  
Councillor Sylvester  
Councillor Whomersley  
Councillor Wyatt

### **Licensing Committee**

**Councillor Ellis (Chair)**  
**Councillor Hughes (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Bacon  
Councillor Ball  
Councillor Barker  
Councillor Browne  
Councillor Clarke  
Councillor Cowen  
Councillor Griffin  
Councillor Jones  
Councillor Mills  
Councillor Pitchley  
Councillor Reynolds  
Councillor Wyatt

### **Planning Board**

**Councillor Atkin (Chair)**  
**Councillor Bird (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Castledine-Dack  
Councillor Cowen  
Councillor Elliott  
Councillor Fisher  
Councillor Havard  
Councillor Keenan  
Councillor Khan  
Councillor McNeely  
Councillor Miro  
Councillor Sansome  
Councillor Tinsley  
Councillor Wilson  
Councillor Wooding

**Staffing Committee**

**Councillor Alam (Chair)**  
**Councillor Allen (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Read  
Councillor Reynolds  
Councillor Singleton

**Standards and Ethics Committee**

**Councillor McNeely (Chair)**  
**Councillor Griffin (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Bacon  
Councillor Castledine-Dack  
Councillor Collingham  
Councillor Cooksey  
Councillor Hughes  
Councillor Sylvester

Parish Council Reps – to be confirmed

**Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**Councillor Clark (Chair)**  
**Councillor Barley (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Baker-Rogers  
Councillor Baum-Dixon  
Councillor Burnett  
Councillor A. Carter  
Councillor Cooksey  
Councillor Elliott  
Councillor Hoddinott  
Councillor Pitchley  
Councillor Wyatt  
Councillor Yasseen

**Health Select Commission**

Councillor Yasseen (Chair)  
Councillor Baum-Dixon (Vice Chair)

Councillor Andrews  
Councillor Atkin  
Councillor Aveyard  
Councillor Baker-Rogers  
Councillor Barley  
Councillor Bird

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 26/05/21**

Councillor A. Carter  
Councillor Elliott  
Councillor Griffin  
Councillor Haleem  
Councillor Havard  
Councillor Hughes  
Councillor Hunter  
Councillor Thompson  
Councillor Wilson  
Councillor Wooding

### **Improving Lives Select Commission**

**Councillor Pitchley (Chair)**

**Councillor Cooksey (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Aveyard  
Councillor Barley  
Councillor Browne  
Councillor Burnett  
Councillor C. Carter  
Councillor Collingham  
Councillor Cowen  
Councillor Elliott  
Councillor Griffin  
Councillor Haleem  
Councillor Hughes  
Councillor Khan  
Councillor Monk  
Councillor Singleton  
Councillor Thompson  
Councillor Wilson

### **Improving Places Select Commission**

**Councillor Wyatt (Chair)**

**Councillor Burnett (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Atkin  
Councillor Barley  
Councillor Cowen  
Councillor Ellis  
Councillor Havard  
Councillor Jones  
Councillor Keenan  
Councillor Khan  
Councillor McNeely  
Councillor Mills  
Councillor Miro  
Councillor Pitchley

Councillor Reynolds  
Councillor Sansome  
Councillor Tinsley  
Councillor Whomersley

**Corporate Parenting Group**

**Councillor Pitchley (Chair) – as Chair of Improving Lives**  
**Councillor Cooksey (Vice Chair) – as Vice Chair of Improving Lives**

Councillor Collingham  
Councillor Cowen  
Councillor McClure

**Introductory Tenancy Review Panel**

Chair and Vice Chair to be drawn from the Improving Lives Scrutiny Commission or Improving Places Scrutiny Commission

Councillor Mills  
Councillor Tinsley

**Joint Consultative Committee**

**Councillor Alam (Chair)**  
**Councillor Allen (Vice Chair)**

Councillor Clark  
Councillor Castledine-Dack  
Councillor Hunter

**Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Councillor Roche (Chair)**

Councillor Cusworth  
Councillor Thompson (Observer)

- 5) That the appointment of Members to joint committees, as set out below be approved.

**Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority**

Councillor Read  
Councillor Allen – Substitute

**Sheffield City Region Combined Authority Housing and Infrastructure Board**

Relevant Cabinet Member

**Sheffield City Region Transport and Environment Board**

Relevant Cabinet Member

**Sheffield City Region Education, Skills and Employability Board**

Relevant Cabinet Member

**Sheffield City Region Business Growth and Recovery Board**

Relevant Cabinet Member

**Sheffield City Region Audit Committee**

Councillor Baker-Rogers  
Councillor Barley

**Sheffield City Region Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Clark  
Councillor Barley

**South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

Councillor Sansome  
Councillor Ball

**South Yorkshire Pension Authority**

Councillor Havard  
Councillor Fisher

**South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel**

Councillor Baum-Dixon

Councillor Haleem

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

**16. AUDIT COMMITTEE**

In moving the minutes Councillor Wyatt noted his thanks to former Councillors Cowles, Vjestica and Walsh for their work on the Audit Committee and welcomed the new Members who had been appointed to the Committee.

**Resolved:** - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 16th March, 2021, be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Wyatt

Secunder:- Councillor Allen

**17. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

In moving the minutes Councillor Roche noted his thanks to former Councillors Mallinder and Watson for their work on the Health and Wellbeing Board and welcomed the new Members who had been appointed to the Board.

**Resolved:** - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 10th March, 2021, be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Roche

Secunder:- Councillor Cusworth

**18. PLANNING BOARD**

In moving the minutes Councillor Sheppard noted his thanks to past members of the Board, former Vice-Chair, former Councillor Williams and officers for their support. Councillor Sheppard also noted his thanks to the members of the public who had attended Planning Board meetings and engaged in the planning process.

**Resolved:** - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board held on 25th February, 18th March and 8th and 29th April, 2021, be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Sheppard

Secunder:- Councillor Atkin

**19. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE**

In moving the minutes Councillor Ellis thanked the former Vice-Chair, former Councillor Beaumont and former Members of Licensing for their work and welcomed the new Members who had been appointed to Licensing.

**Resolved:** - That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Board Sub-Committee held on 2nd2 February, 8th (am and pm), 17th March and 12th April 2021, and of the Licensing Sub-Committee of 11th March, 2021 be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Ellis

Seconder:- Councillor McNeely

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

**(1) Councillor Miro** asked what was the size of the Council's pension fund?

Councillor Atkin explained it was good news and the South Yorkshire Pension Fund at 31<sup>st</sup> March ,2021 was valued at £9.71bn. Rotherham Council's share of the Fund was approximately 14%, therefore, the Borough Council's share of assets at 31st March 2021 would be about £1.38bn.

In a supplementary question Councillor Miro asked if any part of the fund had been from fossil fuels to assist with the effort to kick back the climate change crisis.

Councillor Atkin confirmed the Authority had been working on this for a while and had passed a motion to endeavour to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The fund made a return of 19.5% in 2020/21 and was estimated to be more than 100% funded at the whole fund level at the end of March.

South Yorkshire Pensions had a position statement in respect of Responsible investment (RI).

RI was the practice of incorporating Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues into the investment decision making process.

South Yorkshire Pensions Authority had for many years adopted a pro-active stance in relation to addressing ESG issues and the approach was set out in a number of different policy documents.

As the process of pooling the investments through the Border to Coast Pensions Partnership progresses, the Authority also worked with the 11 other funds in the partnership to a common responsible investment policy.

Talking to companies in which the Authority invested about issues of concern was another crucial activity that formed part of a responsible investment approach and this was done by both through working with Border to Coast who reported on this activity and also through the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum.

One of the biggest challenges faced by society was Climate Change and the impact of global warming. For the Authority as an investor this created risks that some companies invested in have a business model which was unsustainable in the long term while it also created opportunities in terms of new things to invest in. Given the significance of these issues the Authority have developed specific policies in this area.

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

**(1) Councillor Hoddinott** welcomed the good investment in libraries, including in her local one in Wickersley and asked the Cabinet Member to update her on the renovations taking place and when the library would reopen?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed the modernisation programme at Wickersley Library and Neighbourhood Hub was near completion and the site would be reopening to the public on Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2021. The modernisation had included a refresh of the library to improve its visual appearance and revitalise the interior in the form of:-

- redecorated walls and new carpets/vinyl flooring.
- new furniture including a reception counter and mobile shelving.
- improved ICT area including new public PC's, self-service unit and sections for people to use their own devices.
- a new study space.
- a new café area.
- a refreshed meeting room with new furniture.

This was, of course, just one part of the multi-million pound plan to invest in every library in the Borough, which had already secured a new library in Brinsworth and should see new facilities in Swinton and Thurcroft, as well as the new town centre library.

**(2) Councillor A. Carter** asked as the Council had declared a climate emergency, what was the policy and process regarding planting more trees on highways land?

Councillor Lelliott explained the Council did not have a specific policy on planting more trees on highways land. Individual sites were assessed on their merits. The Council had committed some funding to match a number of partner organisations, with a view to planting more than 12,000 new trees. These would be planted in a range of urban settings including on highways land, housing developments and urban parks.

In a supplementary Councillor Carter asked why with the Council's plan for more trees and achieved this in the last financial year, it found it often hard to get agreement from Highways. He asked would the Cabinet Member agree to undertake a review of the policies on highways in

## COUNCIL MEETING - 26/05/21

particular help tackle climate urgency, plant more trees on highways land and make the process much swifter.

Councillor Lelliott confirmed the Tree Management Protocols and Guidance set out the Council's approach to the management of its own tree stock

As part of the Council's budget setting process an investment of £350,000 over the next 2 financial years was approved. The Service was currently developing a proactive planting strategy and working to identify appropriate and available land to support the delivery of this.

**(3) Councillor Sylvester** asked could the Cabinet Member please give their opinion on Rothercard as a tool to aid social inclusion for deprived neighbourhoods?

Councillor Sheppard explained for those may not know, Rothercard was a discounted scheme offered to people in the Borough who fell into one of the following categories:-

- Young people aged 16 to 19 years in full-time education.
- Looked after children/young people.
- Anyone aged over 60.
- Refugees/asylum seekers dependent on asylum seeker support payments.
- Adults on a low income.

The scheme offered customers a range of discounts on leisure activities across the Borough such as:-

- Concessionary rates on a range of leisure activities at Aston-cum-Aughton Leisure Centre, Maltby Leisure Centre, Rotherham Leisure Complex and Wath-upon-Deerne Leisure Centre.
- A Junior Rothercard rate has also been introduced on many sporting activities giving Rothercard holders under the age of 16 an extra 10 percent off the concessionary rate.
- A concessionary rate at Rotherham theatres.
- A concessionary entry price at selected leisure venues across South Yorkshire.

Everyone would want to maintain the principle of offering additional financial support to residents who needed it. However, it had been a long time since the card scheme was designed. Whether Rothercard as it currently existed offered the right discounts to those who needed them most, and whether that was the best possible use of the Council's financial support, was unclear at this moment.

This was why the Council was committed to reviewing the existing scheme and introducing a new card – perhaps an electronic version rather than a cardboard one – that met expectations and resources at the current time to give as much level of support in communities.

In a supplementary question Councillor Sylvester referred to deprivation and poverty and how this was not just about a lack of money, but exclusion from norms of society. Rothercard was a simple solution which back in its heyday had stickers in shops and worked for not just Council services. There appeared now to be less than 8,000 Rothercard owners so encouraged more support in this scheme and asked the Cabinet Member if he would ensure this was properly advertised with discounts and targeted and marketed in the areas and communities where the cards came from.

Councillor Sheppard confirmed involvement was key and when the new scheme was relaunched he would be looking at Members to promote being a provider. The key aim was for a holistic approach to communities in order to enable people to play an active role in activities and social groups and break down any barriers to participating in society.

**(4) Councillor Sylvester** asked with an estimated £16 billion in unclaimed means tested benefits each year (source entitledto.co.uk) an example being a take-up rate of just 60% of eligible claimants for pension credit (source DWP) what measures did the Council have in place to maximise benefit take-up in the Borough please?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed the Council's Advocacy and Appeals Team provided debt and complex benefit advice. Referrals come from Adult Social Services, direct from the public and CAB. Through the work of the Financial Inclusion and Advocacy and Appeals Teams, over 2,500 residents have been supported making benefit claims and appeals. The total value of benefits claimed as a result of this advice was over £2.1m since April 2019.

The Council also commissioned Citizens Advice and Kiveton Park Advice Services, and worked alongside a number of other groups as part of its "Single Advice Model". From all the work undertaken in partnership across a range of issues, the amount of money gained that has benefited people in Rotherham had increased from £2.8 million in 2019 to £5.4 million in 2020.

In addition, the Council also commissioned Age UK and MacMillan to provide specialist support to specific groups.

Finally of course, the Housing, Revenue and Benefits and Care Leaving staff would regularly signpost residents to national welfare services at times when it was felt they may be eligible.

In a supplementary question Councillor Sylvester referred, as an example, to a local elderly resident, who having worked all his life and then cared for an elderly relative, found himself without any money for 7 weeks, having to use food banks and no idea how to access or seek help digitally in order to claim. He asked, therefore, if the Cabinet Member would look to working with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods to perhaps enable Members' surgeries to be used as a one-stop service in Wards where people struggled.

Councillor Sheppard confirmed he would be more than willing to help any individual out especially where they were struggling with applications and would happily work with the Cabinet Member, Neighbourhoods Teams and even Councillor Syvester if any families wished to contact him.

**(5) Councillor A. Carter** asked after the disastrous anti-business Cumulative Impact Zone policy was introduced to Wickersley, would the administration commit to removing this during the next 3 years and would they give a commitment today that they would not look to introduce any more of these in other areas of the Borough?

Councillor Lelliott was confused with what Councillor Carter meant by "disastrous". As night time entertainment venues began to re-open after the lockdown, all the signs continued to indicate a thriving local economy in Wickersley, but with local residents able to call on some extra protections from the Licensing Service to help to reduce anti-social behaviour. The Council would consider any future areas based on their circumstances and following consultation with local residents.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked given that the Cabinet Member disagreed, did she not see that there were areas in the Borough and district centres that had seen a sharp decline in business. Clearly the Cabinet Member did not have the policies to improve district centres, even when the Council was pro-business and supported jobs in the local economy.

Councillor Lelliott disagreed there had been a disaster in Wickersley. The Licensing Policy supported businesses to thrive and ensure communities had a decent quality of life and as a result no applications to this effect had been refused.

**(6) Councillor C. Carter** asked why fly-tipping and littering were still an issue on Grange Lane in Brinsworth and what enforcement action had taken place in the past 12 months?

Councillor Beck explained the Council had undertaken 6 fly tipping investigations in the Grange Lane area of Brinsworth over the previous year. Unfortunately, due to no evidence being available, no formal enforcement action had been taken in relation to these investigations. As ever, if there was evidence that would enable enforcement action, the Council would do so.

Officers did, however, visit the area regularly to undertake patrols and respond to complaints and Fixed Penalty Notices for littering were issued, most recently nearby on Brinsworth Lane.

The Cabinet Member reassured Members more widely that even though enforcement action was affected significantly by the pandemic, in the last year 59 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for fly-tipping offences across the Borough and since September, when the Council's enforcement partner restarted, 647 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued for littering and dog fouling across Rotherham. Between January and March this year 28 cases had also been prepared for prosecution and were currently awaiting a Court date.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter confirmed some real progress had been made, but did the Cabinet Member agree the need for additional steps to solve this problem.

Councillor Beck confirmed this was an ongoing issue across the country not just in Rotherham and the Council was having to work smarter and work with colleagues across the borders. He would continue to work with Members out in neighbourhoods and would look to innovative ways of tackling these issues moving forward.

**(7) Councillor C. Carter** referred to Council housing tenants in Brinsworth being assured that the scheduled refresh of their properties was due for the 2018/19 financial year, yet this had not happened. The Cabinet Member was asked what were the reasons for this and when could residents expect this to happen?

Councillor Brookes confirmed that there had been a delay to planned capital investment work in Council housing at Brinsworth, due to COVID.

The Housing Service carried out external stock condition surveys in Brinsworth in 2018/19. This information was used to help plan what works if any, would be needed within the next 5/10 years in this area. Work for residents in this area was expected in 2022/23 over the next 2 financial years.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked given that the refreshes were significant and behind schedule which was unacceptable, what steps were being taken to ensure delays like this were prevented in the future.

Councillor Brookes confirmed the budget had been carried over to enable the works to be completed and assured Councillor Carter that, as the new portfolio holder, she would be monitoring repairs and maintenance and housing asset improvement programme were at the top of her agenda.

**(8) Councillor Miro** asked how much of the recyclable waste collected was currently recycled and how could this be improved?

Councillor Beck explained the Council was serious about increasing recycling and undertook a significant Waste Service review in 2018 including consultation with residents with transformation over last 3 years. This resulted in improvements to recycling being introduced across Rotherham, including the introduction of plastic recycling and the introduction of the smaller pink lidded general waste bin.

This had been a real success with the amount of cans, glass and plastic collected having doubled and paper and cardboard waste collected increasing by nearly 40%.

The Service was now collecting 75% more dry recycling from residents' homes than in 2018. The general waste from pink lidded bins was sent to the waste facility at Manvers, where more recyclable materials were extracted and sent for processing. Only 1.7% of the waste produced in Rotherham was sent to landfill.

This meant that the Council currently recycled 43.16% of all waste collected.

**(9) Councillor Tinsley** asked with the application deadline for the Levelling Up Fund on 18th June, would RMBC make a credible bid for investment in all 3 Rotherham constituencies where £60million was up for grabs. Where for example in Maltby, this could form part of a bid for improvements to the High Street, Coronation Park or to save the old Maltby Grammar School building.

Councillor Lelliott explained she was sure that after 11 years of austerity, everyone would all want to see more investment in the Borough, and it was a shame that the Government had chosen such an ill-conceived system as the Levelling Up Fund to dangle the carrot of money in front of communities like Rotherham.

Councillor Tinsley mentioned 3 potential projects that may all be very worth, but the Government had given just 3 months to draw up costed schemes, to be judged against Treasury Green Book methodology, asking for public consultation. In contrast, the Government took nearly 5 times as long as that just to approve the Future High Streets Fund bid.

Despite that, staff were doing all that they could to ensure that the Council submitted 3 bids by the Government's 18<sup>th</sup> June deadline, comprising those projects most capable of meeting the Levelling Up Fund criteria. This could include consideration of projects in Maltby as well as other areas.

**(10) Councillor Castledine-Dack** asked could the Council confirm that it would submit a strong bid for £20 million from the Levelling Up Fund which was based on plans put forward by Dinnington Community Land Trust and Dinnington St John's Town Council to rejuvenate Dinnington town centre in time for the first-round deadline on June 18th?

Councillor Lelliott explained, without repeating from the answer before, that the Council aimed to put forward a bid that included the Dinnington District Centre and engagement with key stakeholders was underway with a review of the existing proposals from a range of groups. Projects would be put forward that meet the Government's criteria for this funding stream.

**(11) Councillor Elliott** asked what justification was there for RMBC Leaseholders having to pay out a 35% increase in their service charge this financial year.

Councillor Brookes explained this was good news in that overall leasehold service charge bills were lower this year compared to 2019/20. The average cost per leaseholder this year was £427, whereas last year the average cost was £965 – a reduction of more than half.

Leasehold service charge bills were comprised of a range of elements including contributions to any major repairs, building insurance, communal cleaning, and management costs. It was only the management cost element of the leasehold service charge that had increased, from £107.14 last year to £142.55 this year. However, since major repair works had been reduced during the pandemic, bills had fallen accordingly.

The fee did not cover the cost of running the Service and it was agreed to full cost recovery so management costs were fully recovered.

In a supplementary question Councillor Elliott had spoken to leaseholders and sought their views. This increase would give an extra £20k so who would benefit; not the resident. One such resident was paying for his own building issues, repairs and, with no communal areas, was not getting anything for paying his service charge. Only leaseholders with communal areas, stairs and entrances were getting a service. Would the Cabinet Member look at how the increase was calculated, who signed it off and why some leaseholders have to pay for no end product.

Councillor Brookes explained the costs calculated were a proportion of staffing costs dedicated to leaseholder management. It was not possible to identify costs for this particular resident, but the Home Ownership Service provided clear information to leaseholders on how they could challenge services charges if they believed them to be unfair. The Council also offered various repayment options to any leaseholders who were struggling to pay the charges.

**(12) Councillor Barley** asked if the Leader agreed with her that it was high time the Council made business more accessible to the public and, therefore, ourselves more accountable, by scheduling these meetings, as well as the meetings of Committees and Boards, outside of office hours?

The Leader replied that meetings held at a time allowed Members of the Committee or Council to play a full role, but was happy to consider when was the best time for Members to take part in those meetings.

Improving Lives regularly met in the evening and had had no discerning improvement in attendance. The Council did not guillotine its meetings. However, a guillotine may be required if meetings moved to an evening especially if they continued into the small hours. A later evening meeting may not always be the best and not necessarily all accessible to the public. This would be set in the context of when the best time would be for each meeting.

**(13) Councillor Barley** asked did the Leader not think that the Labour Party's nomination of the same Mayor for the third year in a row, in what was commonly an annual honorary position, exposed the lack of depth in the dramatically smaller Labour Group and further contributed to the impression that Labour was something of a setting sun in Rotherham?

The Leader disagreed.

**(14) Councillor Barley** asked if the Cabinet Member was satisfied that all possible work had been done, and no stone left unturned, in the effort to protect women and girls in Rotherham from organised sexual exploitation, and that the horrors of the past remained in the past?

Councillor Cusworth assured Councillor Barley the Council had strong services and partnership arrangements in place to prevent CSE, and to support victims of such terrible crimes when they did sadly occur. The Council continued to work closely with the National Crime Agency to prosecute perpetrators of non-recent offences, and would continue to do so for the foreseeable future. For many of those people, they very much continued to live with the horrors of the past. At the same time, there would always be men who wished to sexually abuse children. So no-one should be in any way complacent about that.

Since being elected in 2016 the Cabinet Member had been involved in matters related to CYPS, CSE and post-abuse support for survivors. She suggested that all Members work together to raise awareness and report everything. CSE was everyone's business and she looked forward to working with everyone.

**(15) Councillor McNeely** as the Ward Councillor for the Boston Castle Ward, which included the Town Centre, wondered what the Cabinet Member's response was to the MP Alex Stafford's comment that "Forge Island is a White Elephant Scheme".

Councillor Lelliott confirmed she was astonished to hear the comments from the MP for Rother Valley South. She did not think it was the job of an MP to run down the town that they represented, but this, of course, was the problem with the Tory approach of pitting communities against each other for one-off pots of funding.

Forge Island was the key step in delivering the town centre masterplan - a masterplan, that was developed through extensive consultation with communities, businesses and investors and which clearly identified that:-

- People who lived in Rotherham wanted a development like Forge Island – a development they would use and that they could be proud of and;
- That businesses and investors could see the opportunity that Forge Island offered and were eager to be part of Rotherham’s successful regeneration.

The Cabinet Member was glad the Council had pressed ahead, secured a developer, completed high quality enabling works, signed up a state of the art, 8 screen multiplex cinema and were close to announcing deals with other occupiers. Far from being a white elephant, Forge Island was exactly what Rotherham needed, it was what people wanted, and she was proud to say it was being delivered.

**22. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.