

**COUNCIL MEETING
21st July, 2021**

Present:- The Mayor (Councillor Jenny Andrews) (in the Chair); Councillors Allen, Atkin, Austin, Aveyard, Bacon, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bird, Brookes, Browne, Burnett, A Carter, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, Collingham, Cooksey, Cowen, R. Elliott, Ellis, Fisher, Griffin, Havard, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Keenan, Khan, McNeely, Mills, Pitchley, Reynolds, Roche, Sansome, Singleton, Sylvester, Thompson, Tinsley, Whomersley, Wooding, Wyatt and Yasseen.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

23. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor hoped colleagues were enjoying the summer and being careful in the heat. A number of Councillors were not in attendance today, many as a result of having to self-isolate.

The Mayor welcomed the opportunity to report on a number of engagements:-

- Friday , 11th June saw the annual ceremonial tee-off for the RMBC Golf Society Mayor's Charity Cup at the Grange Park Golf Club.
- Saturday, 26th June saw the raising of the Armed Forces flag at the Town Hall to mark the occasion of Armed Forces Day.

This event was again undertaken with strict observance of Covid regulations but meeting socially distanced, the Mayor and Mayoress, the Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress, the Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Eve Keenan, and John Healy MP, were honoured to be in the company of Major Adrian Hunt, Chairman of the Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre, and veteran Ron Moffett MBE who raised the flag on behalf of the veterans of Rotherham.

- The group re-assembled again the following week on Saturday, 3rd July when the flag was lowered by Ron Moffatt.
- This Friday the post-Covid relaunch of the Military Community Veterans Centre will be attended at the New York Stadium. The Mayor was honoured to be invited to present Ron with an Armed Forces Flag in a commemorative box to thank him for his service in the Armed Forces and for all he has done for the veterans over the years.

Engagements would again commence in the next few months as restrictions on gatherings start to lift.

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Alam, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Clark, Cusworth, Hague, Haleem, Hoddinott, Lelliott, McClure, Miro, Monk, Read, Shepherd and Wilson.

25. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications to report.

26. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved: - That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26th May, 2021 be approved for signature by the Mayor, subject to an amendment to Minute No. 15 (Memberships) to confirm the correct Chair and Vice-Chair for the Corporate Parenting Panel as:-

Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member (Chair)

Councillor Pitchley, Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission (Vice-Chair)

Mover: - Councillor Allen

Seconder: - Councillor Roche

27. PETITIONS

The Mayor introduced the report and confirmed the receipt of three petitions received since the last Council meeting which had not met the threshold for consideration by Council.

- Containing 121 signatures calling on the Council to investigate HGV Activity through Maltby.

Mrs. J. Walker addressed the Council as part of the presentation of the petition.

- Containing 258 signatures calling on the Council to provide a pedestrian crossing outside Kilnhurst Primary School, Hooton Road, Kilnhurst.

Councillor Sansome addressed the Council as part of the presentation of the petition.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received.

(2) That the relevant Strategic Directors be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as detailed in the report, by 4th August, 2021.

Mover: - Councillor Allen

Seconder: - Councillor Beck

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

29. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(1) Mr. J. Smith was unable to attend the meeting and would receive a written response.

(2) Mr. M. Marshall was unable to attend the meeting and would receive a written response.

30. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

31. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

On behalf of the Leader the Deputy Leader presented an update statement and in doing so confirmed the country entering into Phase 4 of the Government's roadmap on the 19th July, 2021 relaxing all restrictions.

These changes needed to be approached with caution as by the end of this week Rotherham was likely to have reached its highest case rate during the pandemic with 537 cases per 100,000 residents. This significant transmission increase was of concern and had resulted in thirteen Councillors not being able to attend today's Council and ninety-three members of staff having to self-isolate.

The message of Hands – Face – Space – Vaccine was reinforced. More detail would be provided in due course.

The Deputy Leader, on behalf of the whole Council, wished to formally congratulate the Leader, Councillor Read, and his partner, Councillor Hoddinott, on the safe arrival of their son, Joshua.

Councillor A. Carter also wished to place on record his own congratulations to the Leader and Councillor Hoddinott on their son's birth.

Councillor A. Carter also asked about the impact of the increasing number of positive Covid cases and how this compared to previous peaks during the pandemic in terms of hospitalisations and deaths.

Councillor Allen in response confirmed there to be twenty patients currently receiving treatment at the hospital, one of which was within intensive care. So far no deaths had been recorded.

32. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21st June, 2021 be received.

Mover: - Councillor Allen

Seconder: - Councillor Beck

33. AMENDMENTS TO APPOINTMENTS OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PANELS

Further to Minute No. 15 to the meeting of Council held on 26th May, 2021 consideration was given to the report which provided suggestions on amendments to the nomination of Members to serve on Committees, Boards and Panels.

Councillor A. Carter welcomed the approach to provide maternity leave for Elected Members, but noted there had been no request for suspension of the attendance at a meeting within six months rule.

Councillor Allen confirmed any such request would be reported back to the Council in due course.

Resolved:- (1) That the following amendments be confirmed:-

Improving Lives Select Commission:

Councillor Cowen is to be replaced by Councillor Andrews

Planning Board:

Councillor Aveyard is to be replaced by Councillor Lelliott

Licensing Board, Licensing Committee including sub-committees:

Councillor Cowen is to be replaced by Councillor Monk

(2) That the Membership of the Health, Welfare and Safety Panel as follows be noted:-

- Councillor Saghir Alam – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance
- Councillor Rose McNeely – Improving Places Select Commission
- Councillor Lindsey Pitchley – Improving Lives Select Commission
- Councillor Joanna Baker-Rogers – Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
- TBC – Member and Democratic Panel

(3) That the following maternity leave arrangements be noted for Councillor Browne to deputise for Councillor Hoddinott, on the Audit Committee as Vice-Chair and as a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board from 12th July, 2021 for an initial three-month period, which will be extended further if required.

Mover:- Councillor Allen

Second:- Councillor Roche

34. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

Councillor A. Carter expressed his dissatisfaction with having received the Council Summons, to receive a further notification about potentially cancelling the Council Meeting due to the number of apologies.

Mover:- Councillor McNeely

Second:- Councillor Griffin

35. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover:- Councillor Wyatt

Second:- Councillor Barley

36. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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

Mover:- Councillor Roche

Second:- Councillor Allen

37. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover:- Councillor Atkin

Second:- Councillor Bird

38. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Board Sub-Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Ellis

Second:- Councillor Hughes

39. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

No questions have been submitted.

40. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

Questions 1 to 4 from Councillor Jones were withdrawn.

(5) Councillor A. Carter asked what evidence did the Licensing Committee take into account when dealing with allegations of noise or anti-social behaviour associated with an application?

Councillor Ellis confirmed all licensing applications were reviewed by a number of agencies, including the Police and Environmental Health, prior to a decision being made, any concerns regarding anti-social behaviour or noise would be brought to the attention of the Licensing Committee by those agencies. In addition, any other person may raise concerns in relation to an application and these would also be considered by the Committee. Evidence was presented in many forms including photographs, audio and video recordings and statements.

The Committee would consider evidence or information in whatever form it existed.

Any person or agency that raised concerns regarding an application was also given the opportunity to address the Licensing Committee at the hearing where the application would be considered. Any person raising concerns was, therefore, able to provide more detail to the Committee by expanding on the points that they raised during the application process.

In a supplementary question Councillor A. Carter asked what weight was given to concerns raised by members of the public when concerns had not been raised by statutory agencies.

Councillor Ellis pointed out all representations made were considered regardless of their origin when matters were brought before the relevant Committee. The content was taken into account as part of the decision and relevant mitigation measures included where appropriate.

If Councillor A. Carter had any particular concerns Councillor Ellis, as Chair of the Licensing Board, was happy to discuss further.

(6) Councillor A. Carter was to receive a written response to his question in the absence of the Cabinet Member.

(7) Councillor A. Carter asked as many vital bus services have been lost around the Borough, what was the Council's policy on bringing these back now Coronavirus restrictions have eased?

Councillor Beck explained the Council was acutely aware of the problems that the pandemic had caused to public transport services. The patronage was currently at around 60% pre-pandemic. The Council was working with the Sheffield City Region to support the South Yorkshire network providers in accessing the short-term Government funding through these difficult times.

A Levelling Up Fund Transport bid for £50m worth of capital investment to provide practical improvements for the travelling public had recently been submitted.

In a supplementary question Councillor A. Carter asked if the Cabinet Member would take forward with the Sheffield City Region the issue of networks and the need to ensure that businesses do not prioritise the most profitable routes.

Councillor Beck referred to the Rural Subsidy Grant that had supported rural communities and emphasised the need to support bus companies to ensure the infrastructure was in place.

(8) Councillor Bacon referred to his recent walk around Aston and Todwick and the rest of the Borough where he could not help but notice the neglect of the Council – dangerous potholes, cracked pavements, overflowing bins, and pigeons taking over the train/tram station opposite Forge Island. He asked, therefore, when was the Council going to get a grip of these problems?

Councillor Beck explained continuing to improve the environment in neighbourhoods was a key priority for the Council and despite the £200m per year reductions in Council funding over the last eleven years from the Conservative government, this had resulted in reductions to resources.

Between 2015 and 2024 the Council had allocated an additional £39m towards roads and footpath resurfacing. This programme of work was developed in consultation with Ward Councillors and resulted in 42 roads requested by Ward Councillors.

The Council had allocated £1.2m to improve litter bin provision across the Borough over the next two to three years, and £689k to introduce additional cleaning teams, including additional weekend cleaning resources, and to improve the cleanliness of main arterial roads and cycle routes.

In addition, the Council had agreed £4m of Capital Funding for its Towns and Villages Fund which was planned to be invested in local areas and improve the environment, which Elected Members could get involved in.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bacon asked about the train/tram station opposite Forge Island and if the Cabinet Member would take forward this issue.

Councillor Beck confirmed the train station was not owned or maintained by the Council, but he would forward concerns to the relevant authority.

(9 to 11) Councillor Barley was to receive written responses to her question in the absence of the Leader and Cabinet Members.

(12) Councillor Barley pointed out RMBC have committed to ensuring that 'All people will have the opportunity to make sure each day in their life is meaningful, of value and leads to them having a 'good day'', Addison Day Centre provided this for people with learning disabilities so asked if the Cabinet Member could give evidence that this was now happening away from Addison Road?

Councillor Roche confirmed how My Front Door project was set up to mobilise the plans to transform the Learning and Disability Services in Rotherham. Through the project, the Council have been providing and supporting people with learning disabilities to live a life, rather than solely accessing traditional services.

In 2017, the Council embarked on a consultation programme about Learning Disability Services. The objective was to modernise services, obtain cost savings and co-design new arrangements along with the users, staff, and families.

People and families told the Council they expected support and services to be more person-centred, flexible, available during the day, evening, and weekends and as close to where the person lived as possible, and community-based. People and families wanted more opportunity to contribute and be part of mainstream life.

In May 2018, Cabinet approved the vision and strategy for people with a learning disability. Plans were laid out to show how we will improve people's lives, aspirations, and opportunities. A transformation delivery plan was presented to show how we will make sure all people with a learning disability had access to community-based services that promoted independence, wellbeing, and social inclusion. It would be the difference between "having a life rather than just a service."

The Learning Disability Service would enable people to:-

- Have the opportunity to get a job and contribute to their community
- Have the opportunity to choose where they live
- Have access to a good quality health service
- Be kept safe and protected from all forms of exploitation

- Access services of the highest quality which make a difference in assisting people to be as independent as possible, and
- Offer services that are affordable, personalised and what people would want to choose.

It was difficult to compare Addison Road due to the pandemic and the range of services being limited.

Councillor Roche provided a number of examples of comments from service users since the Learning Disability Service was modernised.

In a supplementary question Councillor Barley accepted there were some clients who were satisfied with their new arrangements, but representations were still being received from users of Addison Day Centre who were experiencing difficulties or using services they were not comfortable with. The Cabinet Member was asked if he would look at these cases and speak to people again.

Councillor Roche confirmed he was unable to discuss in this meeting individual cases, but invited Councillor Barley to refer the cases she was aware of.

He was happy to look again and discuss issues they may have which may have been compromised by the pandemic. However, in the main feedback received from people who have moved to other activities and pathways had been really positive.

(13) Councillor Singleton asked why was the Council not better equipped to deal with overgrown vegetation in the summer months? Extra funding, provisions of salt, and contracts of vehicle fleets were put in place for winter conditions so what more could be done to prepare early for summer growth, which had the potential to be just as dangerous?

Councillor Beck explained the weather had meant that this year had been challenging for the Grounds Maintenance Service. The season started off exceptionally wet, which disrupted early work, followed by a period of warm dry weather, which resulted in a spurt of growth.

With that in mind, the Cabinet Member was working with the Grounds Maintenance Service to identify what more was required going forwards which was linked to the availability of resources.

(14) Councillor Singleton referred to the Road Safety Programme which was a welcome investment, but must be prioritised in the right way. He asked why have 20 mph roundels being planned for Hellaby Village, but not for Brampton-en-le-Morthen, where the roads were narrower, the traffic density higher, cars were racing past a children's playground and the busy new Rising Deer.

Councillor Beck confirmed the Council currently responded to local road

safety concerns through the Neighbourhood Road Safety Programme, so the schemes in the Programme have been identified following requests and submissions from Ward Councillors. There was no submission for road safety measures in Brampton-en-le-Morthen as part of the latest tranche.

(15 and 16) Councillor Miro would receive written responses to his questions in his absence.

(17) Councillor Sylvester asked if there was any indication that Selective Licensing had caused any private landlords to sell their properties rather than conform to licensing requirements?

Councillor Brookes confirmed there was no evidence to support the indication that landlords were disposing of properties in Selective Licensing areas to avoid the requirement to license their properties.

In a supplementary question Councillor Sylvester asked if the Cabinet Member agreed with him that the main priority of Selective Licensing was to secure decent living standards for residents whilst asking if the current license fee was enough to adequately enforce and monitor the process, when it may appear some landlords may refuse to comply and get out of the market.

Councillor Brookes pointed out that the main objective of Selective Licensing was to improve the housing stock. The current fee was adequate and more recently enforcement officers had been employed in order to deal with issues associated with the Selective Licensing process.

(18) Councillor Sylvester asked could the Cabinet Member please supply the number or best estimate of former Council homes in Rotherham sold under the Right to Buy that were now private rented?

Councillor Brookes confirmed over 16,500 Council homes have been sold in Rotherham through the Right to Buy scheme since 1981. The Council did not hold detailed or complete information about each of these properties beyond the initial Right to Buy sale, in terms of subsequent changes in tenure or ownership, as it would not be appropriate to hold the detail of private ownership.

However, the Housing Service had cross referenced Right to Buy property data held, unique property reference numbers and data estimates of the tenure of all properties in the Borough. From this, 2,606 properties sold under the Right to Buy (around 16%) were currently estimated to be privately rented.

In a supplementary question Councillor Sylvester referred to properties purchased through Right to Buy and then privately rented which meant some residents were having to pay £145.00 per week for the same house compared to Council rented of £75.00 per week.

He asked, therefore, if, as part of Selective Licensing, tenancies could be protected especially in deprived areas.

Councillor Brookes could see the merit in such a proposal and did not disagree with Councillor Sylvester.

(19) Councillor Collingham referred to how a vibrant Parish Council could empower local residents whereas a weak one could discourage, even divide them. He, therefore, asked what the Council was doing to promote good practice among Parish Councils and would the Council commit to sending a hard copy of the Code of Conduct to every Parish Councillor?

Councillor Allen wholeheartedly agreed with Councillor Collingham that a vibrant Parish Council could empower local residents. The Deputy Leader was delighted to inform Members that this week she endorsed the refreshed Borough Council and Local Councils Joint Working Agreement, which would be published by the Assistant Chief Executive over the Summer.

All Town and Parish Councils and Ward Members had the opportunity to input into this refreshed Agreement. The Agreement was a statement of principles by which Rotherham Council and the Local Councils would work and illustrated the commitment to working together collaboratively.

The Council had a Parish Council Liaison Officer within the Neighbourhoods Team, and over the years they have helped promote good practice amongst Parish Councils (as well as Council Services and other partners) via the Joint Working Group, Parish Network meetings, e-newsletters, joint training and development and numerous 'issue specific' pieces of work, such as flood resilience.

This Agreement included a section on Standards.

The Deputy Leader would suggest to the Head of Legal Services and Councillor McNeely, as Chair of Rotherham Council's Standards and Ethics Committee, that consideration be given to organising a Code of Conduct session for the Parish Councils in the near future where Members would be taken through the content.

In a supplementary question Councillor Collingham, as a member of the Standards and Ethics Committee, was keen to explore training and support for all Councillors and asked if, in addition to a training event for Parish Councils, a copy of the Code of Conduct would be provided for all via the respective Clerks. He also pointed out that the position of Parish Council Liaison Officer was currently vacant.

Councillor Allen confirmed arrangements would be made and Parish Councils were welcome to suggest any areas they wished to see training progressed on.

In terms of the vacancy this was in the process of being advertised and in the interim the role would be overseen by the Manager.

Arrangements would also be made to circulate a copy of the Code of Conduct to all Parish Council Clerks.

(20) Councillor Collingham was to receive a written response to his question in the absence of the Cabinet Member.

(21) Councillor Ellis was to receive a written response to her question in the absence of the Cabinet Member.

(22) Councillor C. Carter welcomed the opportunity see wild flowers blooming around the Borough. These rewilding schemes have been really successful and well-received by residents, but asked why had there not been more rapid expansion of these schemes in places like Brinsworth?

Councillor Beck, like Councillor Carter, was pleased to see the wildflowers blooming across the Borough. Rotherham had led the way in introducing these types of areas and had been nationally recognised for the many miles of wildflowers that bloom on the central reservations every year.

The Council was proud of its success and as part of the budget for 2020/21 the Council invested in the introduction of twelve more pilot areas of wildflowers across the Borough. These were introduced earlier this year.

Whilst there were no areas in Brinsworth Ward at present, a pilot area of 500 square metres of wild-flowers was in place on Orgreave Road in Catcliffe.

The Council would be happy to work with Councillor Carter to identify appropriate locations in Brinsworth for similar areas to be implemented in the future.

In a supplementary question Councillor C. Carter asked if the Council had looked to bring the service in house in order to expand the service at reduced cost.

Councillor Beck confirmed this was an area currently under development on where the resource was best placed.

(23) Councillor C. Carter was to receive a written response to her question in the absence of the Cabinet Member.

41. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for consideration.