

COUNCIL MEETING
4th October, 2023

Present:- Councillor Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Cowen, Alam, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Aveyard, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Barker, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, Brookes, Browne, Burnett, A Carter, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Cooksey, Cusworth, Elliott, Ellis, Fisher, Griffin, Haleem, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Mills, Miro, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Roche, Sheppard, Tarmey, Tinsley, Whomersley, Wilson, Wyatt and Yasseen.

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

21. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor noted his diary had been extremely busy, saying less than two weeks after the last meeting he was honoured to lead the Yorkshire Day celebrations and welcome people from all over the county and further to our town.

A month later was the Rotherham Show, the event seemed to get better by the year. The weather was kind to us, and the atmosphere was fabulous. He noted that success did not happen by chance and said a massive thank you to everyone involved in the planning and on the day of these marvellous events. The overwhelming positive feedback received owes everything to their efforts.

He acknowledged 2 extremely poignant events that took place within two days of each other.

On the 5 September he was present alongside a number of people who had worked tirelessly to achieve recognition for Arthur Wharton, a blue plaque now sat proudly at the Clifton Lane Stadium to celebrate the world's first black professional footballer and a pioneering and truly world class sportsman across many disciplines.

A couple of days earlier was the unveiling of a National Police Memorial to the Police Constable John Kew. PC Kew was killed in the line of duty, his life tragically cut short in his home patch in Swinton. PC Kew was the last officer to be murdered on duty in South Yorkshire.

Following the ceremony, the Police Memorial Trust presented him with a boxed Plaque which would be permanently displayed in the Town Hall. Recognition for Arthur Wharton and PC Kew was truly deserved and well overdue.

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He understood that the Reytons would be playing to 20,000 at Clifton Park next July. It was going to be fantastic; the lads really were so proud to be doing this in their hometown and had worked so hard and were truly deserving of the success they were now achieving.

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Resolved: That apologies for absence be received from Councillors Clark and Thompson.

23. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 July 2023, be approved.

24. PETITIONS

The Mayor introduced the report and confirmed the receipt of 3 petitions received since the last Council meeting:

- Containing 215 verified signatures calling on the Council to consider provide more school places at Waverly Junior School.
- Containing 130 verified signatures calling on the Council to consider improvements at the Todwick Roundabout.
- Containing 33 verified signatures calling on the Council to consider traffic calming along Melton High Street.

The lead petitioners for 2 of the petitions, Mr Jamie Baggaley, speaking for the provision of more school places at Waverly Junior School and Mr Ian Sanderson, speaking for improvements at the Todwick Roundabout attended the meeting and presented their petitions to Council.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the Council receive the petitions listed at paragraph 2.1 of the report and the lead petitioners be entitled to address the Council for a total period of 5 minutes in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme.
3. That the relevant Strategic Directors be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday 18 October 2023.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

26. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions submitted in writing for this meeting.

27. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no such items that required the exclusion of the press and public from this meeting.

28. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

During his statement, the Leader recalled that he had spoken before the summer about the sad death of Marcia Grant, one of the Council's foster carers. He noted that yesterday a guilty plea was entered at court by a 13 year old boy, to the charge of death by dangerous driving. He noted that in his time as Leader, the Council had been through some very sad and difficult times, but this was one of the most tragic incidents that he could remember. He wanted to send thoughts and prayers to Marcia's family, and he knew that the deepest sympathies of all in the chamber would be with the family at this time.

Over the summer the GCSE and A Level, results were released, and congratulations were sent to all students across the Borough, who had worked so hard for their exams.

Nearly 90,000 people attended Clifton Park for the annual Rotherham Show, which was widely regarded as the most successful for many years. Thanks were offered to all the team who made it such a success year on year.

The Council had started to see some of its investments come to fruition. He attended Maltby for a visit with the Northern Housing Consortium 2 weeks ago, visiting some of the residents in around 130 Council properties there, benefiting from a retrofit programme, new doors windows and insulation who could save tenants as much as £400 a year on their energy bills.

He was at Maltby Academy the week before, with the Chief Executive and Maltby Learning Trust, Dave Sutton, to see the transformation of the old grammar school building, which had taken place. The project was not just saving a local landmark but also creating new facilities, business and teaching spaces that would stand the community in good stead and generate jobs and opportunities for years to come.

He visited Swinton opening the new show homes of the Ben Bailey development in the centre of that community. The homes looked great and investment in the Civic Hall had been completed. The revamped building was open and work on the new library was underway.

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But, colleagues, it was also over the summer that we learned the Government's had singled Rotherham out, as the only part of South Yorkshire to be facing a cut to long term funding for survivors of sexual abuse. He noted that whilst neighbours would benefit from an extension to the Government's Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund, Rotherham was being left behind and Rotherham's Abuse Counselling Service was facing a shortfall in their funding as a result. He had written to the Minister raising his concern that Rotherham, of all places should be a priority for Government funding, not an afterthought but they did not understand. He had asked officers to look at how the Council may be able to step up and fill some of that gap, and a proposal would be brought on that basis over the forthcoming weeks.

Councillor Ball shared the Leader's sentiments regarding Marcia Grant, and it was good to see that justice was being done. In regard to Maltby he was pleased the Leader had visited. He noted that the funding for transformation of the old grammar school building at Maltby, through the Levelling Up Fund, had been provided by the Government rather than the Council.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester sought clarification regarding the lost funding regarding CSE, and whether it was relative towards support services for survivors post or regarding investigation measures.

Councillor Reynolds objected to the use of the term 'they did not understand,' whoever 'they' were. To suggest that 'they' did not get it because funding was being removed, was wrong because it was Rotherham Borough Councillors who did not get it right at the start and created the mess in the first instance.

In response the Leader noted he was always happy to thank the Government for additional investment and noted a significant amount of funding had been made available to Rotherham town centre by the Government, however, he noted that half the Council's budget was also funding by the Government, but it was Council decisions that had made that funding available for the wide range of projects and communities.

He clarified that it was not specifically funding for survivors of CSE, but it was funding for survivors of sexual violence, in the many forms that it took. This was one of the big Government funding streams that went directly to providers of those services based on a competitive bidding process. As a result of that process, neighbours in Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield were successful in securing that funding and the providers in Rotherham were not, which meant they would be, without any other source of income, reducing the services made available.

In response to Councillor Reynolds point, the Leader clarified that some of the Members involved then were still Members who held their hands up and commissioned the Jay report at the beginning. Some Members had led the process of improvement through that period of time. Some

Members had only been elected for a number of months when it was announced and had taken responsibility to bring about those improvements. He was not allaying the failings of the past, they were real and happened and a lot of money and effort had been put in to put those things as right as was possible. They would continue to shout to ensure those services were as heavily funded as possible, so the people of Rotherham did not lose out. He expected that the Government, regardless of who held the power, would want to work with Rotherham to address this and ensure services were right going forward. He indicated that he would keep raising this when he felt it was needed.

29. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 10 July and 7 August 2023 be noted.

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

Councillor Read proposed the report asking all to check the nominations listed in Appendix B of the Mayor's Letter. He noted that a further report would be brought to the November meeting to reflect the changes required after the by-election.

The report was seconded by Councillor Allen.

Councillor A Carter indicated that by voting for this report they were passing no comments on the other groups nominations.

Resolved: That Council:

1. Noted the new political balance of the Council as a result of the by-election.
2. That the entitlement of the membership of the political groups be agreed and such entitlements be reflected in Council's appointments of members to committees as detailed in the Mayor's Letter.

POLITICAL GROUPS

Name of Group	Designated Leader & Deputy Leader (Number of Members)
Labour	Leader – Councillor Chris Read Deputy Leader – Councillor Sarah Allen (34 Members*)
Conservative	Leader – Councillor Simon Ball Deputy Leader – Councillor Lewis Mills (15 Members)
Liberal Democrats	Leader – Councillor Adam Carter (4 Members)
Independent Conservative	Leader – Councillor Barley (2 Members)

*Figure includes Kilnhurst and Swinton East Vacancy

**Non-Aligned Members: Councillor(s) Bennett-Sylvester, Wilson, Elliott, Jones

***maternity leave from 7 August 23

NOMINATIONS TO COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PANELS

<u>Cabinet – 9L</u>
Leader – Councillor Read
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working – Councillor Allen
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Cusworth
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health – Councillor Roche
Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy – Councillor Lelliott
Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment – Councillor Beck
Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion – Councillor Sheppard
Cabinet Member for Housing – Councillor Brookes***
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance – Councillor Alam
<u>Audit Committee - 3L, 1C, 1NA</u>
Councillor Baker-Rogers
Councillor Browne

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Councillor Wyatt
Councillor Mills
Councillor Elliott
<u>Licensing Board – 12L, 5C, 1LD, IC & 2NA</u>
Councillor Ellis
Councillor Hughes
Councillor Wyatt
Councillor Clark
Councillor Pitchley
Councillor Cooksey
Councillor Hoddinott
Councillor Monk
Councillor McNeely
Councillor Browne
Councillor Aveyard
Councillor Haleem
Councillor Barker
Councillor Castledine-Dack
Councillor T Collingham
Councillor Mills
Councillor Reynolds
1 x Liberal Democrats Vacancy
1 x Independent Conservative Vacancy
Councillor Jones
Councillor Bennett-Sylvester
<u>Licensing Committee – 9L, 4C, 1LD & 1 NA</u>
Councillor Ellis
Councillor Hughes
Councillor Wyatt
Councillor Clark
Councillor Pitchley
Councillor Cooksey
Councillor Hoddinott
Councillor Monk
Councillor McNeely
Councillor Barker
Councillor T Collingham
Councillor Mills
Councillor Reynolds
1 x Liberal Democrats Vacancy
Councillor Jones
<u>Planning Board – 9L, 4C, 1LD & 1NA</u>
Councillor Atkin
Councillor Bird
Councillor Taylor
Councillor Cowen
Councillor Andrews

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Councillor Keenan
Councillor Sheppard
Councillor Khan
Councillor Havard
Councillor Ball
Councillor Bacon
Councillor Burnett
Councillor Fisher
Councillor Tarmey
Councillor Elliott
<u>Staffing Committee – 3L, 1C & 1LD</u>
Councillor Read
Councillor Allen
1 x appropriate Cabinet Member as determined by the matter to be considered
Councillor T Collingham
Councillor Tarmey
<u>Standards and Ethics Committee – 5L, 2C & 1NA</u>
Councillor McNeely
Councillor Griffin
Councillor Hughes
Councillor Keenan
Councillor Yasseen
Councillor Z Collingham
Councillor Bacon
Councillor Wilson
<u>Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 7L, 3C, 1LD & 1NA</u>
Councillor Clark
Councillor Bacon
Councillor Baker-Rogers
Councillor Pitchley
Councillor Cooksey
Councillor Yasseen
Councillor Wyatt
Councillor Browne
Councillor Ball
Councillor Tinsley
Councillor Miro
Councillor Elliott
<u>Health Select Commission – 10L, 5C, 1LD, 1IC & 1NA</u>
Councillor Yasseen
Councillor Miro
Councillor Griffin
Councillor Havard

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Councillor Bird
Councillor Cooksey
1 x Labour Vacancy
Councillor Hoddinott
Councillor Andrews
Councillor Keenan
Councillor Foster
Councillor Baum-Dixon
Councillor Hunter
1 x Conservative Vacancy
1 x Conservative Vacancy
1 x Conservative Vacancy
Councillor Thompson
Councillor Wilson
Improving Lives Select Commission – 10L, 5C, 1LD, 1IC & 1NA
Councillor Pitchley
Councillor Cooksey
Councillor Baker-Rogers
Councillor Griffin
Councillor Hughes
Councillor Monk
Councillor McNeely
Councillor Khan
Councillor Haleem
Councillor Atkin
Councillor Bacon
Councillor Z Collingham
Councillor Mills
1 x Conservative Vacancy
1 x Conservative Vacancy
Councillor Bennett-Sylvester (gifted by Liberal Democrats)
Councillor Barley
Councillor Wilson
Improving Places Select Commission – 10L, 5C, 1LD, 1IC & 1NA
Councillor Wyatt
Councillor Tinsley
Councillor Taylor
Councillor Havard
Councillor Cowen
Councillor Ellis
Councillor Atkin
Councillor McNeely
Councillor Aveyard
Councillor Khan
Councillor Andrews
Councillor T Collingham
Councillor Castledine-Dack
Councillor Reynolds

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1 x Conservative Vacancy
Councillor C Carter
Councillor Barley
Councillor Bennett-Sylvester
<u>Corporate Parenting Group – 3L, 1C & 1LD</u>
Councillor Cusworth
Councillor Pitchley
Councillor Browne
Councillor Z Collingham
Councillor C Carter
<u>Introductory Tenancy Review Panel – 2L 1C & 1IC</u>
Chair and Vice Chair to be drawn from members of the Improving Lives Scrutiny Commission or Improving Places Scrutiny Commission
Councillor McNeely
Councillor Cooksey
1 x Conservative Vacancy
Councillor Bennett-Sylvester (Gifted by Independent Conservative)
<u>Joint Consultative Committee – 3L, 1C & 1LD</u>
Councillor Alam
Councillor Allen
Councillor Clark
1 x Conservative Vacancy
Councillor A Carter
<u>Health and Wellbeing Board – 2L</u>
Councillor Roche
Councillor Cusworth
Councillor Castledine-Dack (observer)
<u>South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue</u>
Councillor Wyatt (Spokesperson)

31. **AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

In proposing the report, Councillor Baker-Rogers explained the report presented a final draft of the work undertaken by the Audit Committee in 2022/23. In publishing the report the Council was going beyond what was required for legal compliance and demonstrated best practice.

The key outcomes were an unqualified external audit opinion on the Council's statement of accounts confirming their accuracy and

completeness. The timely signoff of the accounts to the amended timetable and the Annual Governance Statement that reflected the changes within the Council, the positive opinion from the Head of Internal Audit in his annual report and a risk management process that was embedded within the Council. There was also an updated terms of reference for the Audit Committee for 2023/24 reflecting the revised CIPFA guidance.

She offered her thanks to all members of the Audit Committee, officers and external auditors.

Councillor Browne seconded the report.

Resolved: That the Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23 be approved.

32. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM DINNINGTON 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 Dinnington as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillors Whomersley, Castledine-Dack and Hall provided an update on Dinnington Ward.

Councillor Whomersley drew particular attention to:

- The privilege he felt at being a Ward Councillor.
- How much he enjoyed talking, listening to and helping local residents.
- The 5 Ward priorities were:
 - Improving local environment and supporting crime prevention strategies.
 - Target anti-social behaviour in hotspot areas.
 - Supporting initiatives to improve the town centre market and investment in local economy.
 - Support improvements to highway maintenance.
 - Support and develop initiatives to improve wellbeing.
- A range of information including the 2021 new Ward profile, previous Ward priorities, actions taken to address them along with feedback from residents was used to inform the current Ward profiles.
- The Ward was very mixed with larger rural areas along with some very deprived urban streets.
- The aim was to put communities at the heart of everything they did, to make people healthier, happier and safer.

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- The community clean-up days were great examples of communities working together along with volunteers and partner organisations.
- They had recently started holistic projects in line with their wellbeing priority working towards residents being happier and healthier.

Councillor Castledine-Dack drew particular attention to:

- It was a diverse Ward with a large urban centre and a collection of rural communities, and the Ward plan needed to adapt to the diverse needs of the whole of the Ward.
- They supported the creation of Billington's new Queen Elizabeth, the seconds community woodland.
- They had engaged with schools enabling children to actively participate in clearing litter and planting trees.
- They had been advocating for the repair of damaged verges and street furniture and the town's historic cross.
- They engaged with the local police teas to address community concerns including the provision of home and vehicle security items.
- A number of speed watch sessions were organised.

Councillor Hall noted the following:

- She had lived in Dinnington all her life and was enthusiastic about making it a better place for everyone.
- A scarecrow competition had been arranged with a BBQ.
- She wanted to thank each and every one of the officers and the
- Co-ordinators who had taken the time to speak with her to help ease her into be in the role of a Councillor.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

33. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WALES 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 Wales as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillors Beck and Havard provided an update on Wales Ward and drew particular attention to:

- Noting that it had always had a great community that had supported each other from the first and second world wars to the miners' strike and through to today's cost of living crisis and rising mental health issues.

- It was a proud and tight-knit community that looked out for each other.
- Thanks was offered to the community leaders, amazing teaching staff, staffing the neighbourhood teams.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

34. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM ANSTON AND WOODSETTS 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 Anston and Woodsetts as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillors Baum-Dixon, Tarmey and Wilson provided an update on Anston and Woodsetts Ward.

Councillor Baum-Dixon drew particular attention to:

- He offered his thanks for the Neighbourhood Ward officers, and the PCSO's who helped deliver their ideas.
- They had helped to fund play equipment at the primary school and assisted the Neighbourhood Watch with CCTV cameras, along with installation of Ring Doorbells.
- He noted that road safety had been a key focus and consultation was being carried out on a wide-ranging speed reduction project.
- Arranged for the removal of some trees and shrubs in areas where drug dealing, and anti-social behaviour was taking place and tidying up other areas.
- He highlighted the issues of rural and wildlife crime in the area and how a WhatsApp group set up by locals was already having success in helping to catch criminals.
- He was very proud of everything they had achieved.

Councillor Tarmey made the following points:

- He thanked Nicky, Andrea, Kylie and Council colleagues who helped implement their plans.
- They had supported local scout groups amongst other community groups.
- Road safety was a big priority for their Ward.
- A community orchard had been planted in North Anston.

Councillor Wilson highlighted the following:

- She was pleased at the regeneration that was being carried out, that would help residents and businesses have a much more pleasant space to be in.

- They had created a Covid memorial area for people to go and remember their loved ones.
- Again, she thanked the neighbourhood co-ordinators and PCSO's.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked that information on purchasing Ring Doorbells be passed on to assist other members.

35. NOTICE OF MOTION -

Notice of Motion – Adoption of a proportional mechanism for nomination of the Deputy Mayor

To be moved by Councillor Drew Tarmey and seconded by Councillor Adam Carter:

That this Council:

- a. Recognises the important role the Mayor and Deputy Mayor play in the civic life of the Borough.
- b. Accepts that every citizen in the Borough should have the opportunity over a period of time to be represented by a 'first citizen' who shares their individual values and lived experiences.
- c. Accepts that, although the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor are not political appointments, it has been the convention in recent years for the majority political group to select the Deputy Mayor as a consequence of its overall voting majority.
- d. Accepts that in recent years the political composition of the council and the expectations of the public have changed; therefore, consideration should be given to the principle of political balance when mayoral appointments are made.
- e. Seeks to adopt a voluntary protocol to ensure that the right to nominate the Deputy Mayor (and therefore the mayoralty) rotates between council groups.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

- a. Avoid multiple nominations for the office of Deputy Mayor by adopting a protocol to ensure that the right to nominate the Deputy Mayor rotates between political groupings on the basis of the number of 'points' accrued by that group.
- b. Adopt a points-based system, the balance of which is to be maintained by the relevant Officers, as follows:
 - a. Each political group accrues points equal to the total number of elected members in their group on the 1st January each year (to a maximum of 59).
 - b. The group having the greatest number of points in any year will be invited to nominate the Deputy Mayor, and 59 points will be deducted from the balance of that group (a negative balance is permitted).
 - c. In the event of two groups having the same number of points, the group holding the mayoralty least recently invited to nominate the Deputy Mayor.

- d. Where a group is not able to nominate a member, they shall lose 50% of the points for nominating a Deputy Mayor. This rule may be waived by agreement in consultation with group leaders (for example, very small groups).
- e. In the event that a group ceases to exist its points are lost and are not transferrable to another group. Similarly, if a group splits, points will be retained by the largest of the successor groups.
- f. In the event that a member retires or is not re-elected to the council during their term as Deputy Mayor or Mayor, the same group shall nominate their successor. If the Mayor retires or is not re-elected the Deputy Mayor shall become Mayor and will serve more than one full term, the group of the departing member shall nominate the Deputy Mayor for the remainder of the year only.
- g. The adoption of this protocol does not alter the right of the Council to elect any of its members as Deputy Mayor or Mayor at the Annual Council Meeting; it is intended to provide clarity and structure to the process. This proposal is not intended to alter the existing mayoral succession plan for the next municipal year, except in accordance with the procedure outlined above. Points will begin to accrue from 1st January 2024.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

36. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers Second: Councillor Browne

37. 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 Cusworth

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

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

Mover: Councillor Ellis Second: Councillor Hughes

39. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Atkin

Secunder: Councillor Bird

40. STAFFING COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Alam

Secunder: Councillor Allen

41. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

Question 1: Councillor Burnett:

This question was withdrawn.

Question 2: Councillor Burnett:

Could you inform me when the last review of fire cover was conducted in Rotherham?

Councillor Wyatt responded that the Service held discussions in relation to fire cover at Rotherham in 2014 whilst Close Proximity Crewing was being considered. The day staffing appliance was introduced in 2017. Currently the service was preparing for a new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). As part of that process a full fire cover review in South Yorkshire would be conducted.

Question 3: Councillor Burnett:

With the amount of housing and warehouses being built within the Borough, should the second night shift at Rotherham station be a permanent night shift?

Councillor Wyatt responded that any re-integration of a permanent second night shift appliance at Rotherham would be based on overall risk, which would and did change over time. The service considered risk across the whole service when looking at resource allocation and any such change would be determined by the fire cover review planned as part of the CRMP process.

In his supplementary question Councillor Burnett indicated his understanding was Rotherham should have 9 fire fighters 24 hrs a day, but it had 8 during the day and 4 on a night shift. He believed that one of the fire engines was shipped out to cover elsewhere, 90% of the time, thus reducing firefighters in the Rotherham station to 4. There was a reduction in Dearne. Rotherham was potentially getting busier, and he accepted there was going to be a review, but did he support the additional

nightshift crew in Rotherham to protect residents and businesses now as there had been an increase in housing and warehouses?

Councillor Wyatt indicated that a response would be provided in writing to the supplementary question.

Question 4: Councillor Burnett:

Please could you provide the council with an update on the forecasted financial position of SYP for the current year?

Councillor Haleem responded indicating that South Yorkshire Police's financial position was presented bi-monthly to the PCC's Public Accountability Board (PAB).

The South Yorkshire Police Force forecasted financial position as reported to Police Accountability Board on 7th September 2023 and as published on the website showed an underspend of £1.49m.

Budget monitoring reports contain a forecasted financial position only and, as we know from the Council's own reports, forecasts change from month to month.

The next report was due to on 6th November which would, also be published on the website.

In his supplementary Councillor Burnett noted that when he asked about the precept rise earlier in the year, you indicated you fully supported the rise in the precept, that you were happy to follow the advice of the financial experts but did criticise another Member for their views about the rise, who was critical and voted against the rise. That Member was not able to have a voice in the chamber, but the reasons were for this were now understood. It was noted that the Member had later clarified that they did not want residents of Rotherham paying an increase in the precept. South Yorkshire Police was currently forecasting an underspend. Councillor Haleem and other members of the panel had potentially fallen short of properly scrutinising the Commissioner so an apology be issued and would they properly scrutinise the Commissioner's officer especially if there was to be an underspend?

Councillor Haleem said they were glad South Yorkshire Police was being resourced through the precept to recruit more police on a permanent basis. That was the position advocated by the Government. It was bizarre that it was not the position advocated by Rotherham Conservatives.

Question 5: Councillor Ball:

Was it you as chair that cancelled the budget working group only for it to have to be reinstated by the Commissioner?

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Councillor Haleem responded that she could confirm that no meetings of the Budget Working Group had been cancelled by the Chair, Commissioner or by the Panel. As Rotherham MBC's representative on the Budget Working Group, she would expect to be attending forthcoming meetings.

Question 6: Councillor Ball:

What were the reasons for you as Chair removing the performance group from the Police and Crime Panel?

In her response Councillor Haleem noted that at the Police and Crime Panel Annual meeting held on 12 June 2023, Members agreed that arrangements would be made with the Commissioner's Office for all Panel Members to attend a Performance Induction Briefing later this year. Arrangements were currently being made for November 2023. Members would then consider appointing a Lead and Deputy Lead Member for Performance following the Performance Induction Briefing and agreed a future cycle of meeting dates.

She explained that meetings of the Performance Sub-Group were therefore currently in abeyance, but she did not remove them, and was not the Chair at the time the decision was taken in June.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball asked if she agreed with him that if the performance group was removed that it indicated there was something to hide. Could she provide any reasons as to why this group had been removed?

Councillor Haleem confirmed that she had nothing to hide.

Question 7: Councillor Ball:

Could you inform him how many South Yorkshire Police officers were being investigated for gross misconduct at the present time?

Councillor Haleem indicated that it would be a question he would need to direct to the Chief Constable. She could tell him that South Yorkshire Police Force published the outcome of misconduct hearings on their website. There had been 7 misconduct hearings between May and August and of them 4 officers were dismissed without notice, 2 officers had already resigned but would have been dismissed without notice and 1 officer received a final written warning for a maximum of 2 years.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball asked if Council Haleem felt it was good enough given the size of the force in South Yorkshire and was there anything to compare that against?

Councillor Haleem declined to answer the question.

Question 8: Councillor Hoddinott:

Had the Police and Crime Panel looked at the effectiveness of the police response to traffic offences including speeding?

Councillor Haleem said on behalf of the Police and Crime Panel, she could confirm that the Panel had, on a quarterly basis, scrutinised, questioned and received assurances from the Commissioner around South Yorkshire Police's response to traffic offences including speeding.

At the Panel meeting held on 3 February 2023, Members received the Commissioner's draft Police and Crime Plan for 2023-2025. At this meeting, the Commissioner informed Members that the key theme behind the plan was 'Working Together for a Safer South Yorkshire', reflecting what had happened in the past year with the forefront concerns being around road safety and safer streets. It was also recognised that Police would not be able to carry out all duties as a single organisation, but that partnership working would be required for some priorities.

Following publication of the Commissioner's final Police and Crime Plan for 2023-2025, the Panel received the Quarter 1 Monitoring Delivery of the Police and Crime Plan Quarterly Report (April to June 2023), at its meeting held on 25 September 2023, which set out the achievements made against the areas of focus within the Police and Crime Plan (Tackling Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour - including Speeding and Road Safety). The Quarter 1 performance report focused on the work of 2 of the 4 neighbourhood teams - Barnsley and Sheffield and provided updates on their progress.

The Panel would continue to actively question the Commissioner on the work being undertaken by South Yorkshire Police to reduce traffic offences including speeding in our local areas.

In her supplementary Councillor Hoddinott welcomed that this was being continually considered. Road safety and speeding was an issue across the Borough. She felt there were things that could be done as a Council, which had the road safety schemes, however, enforcement was a really key part of it and she asked if the Panel could scrutinise not just the Force's work but also how they worked in partnership with the Safer Road Partnership ensuring they were playing a full role. It was concerning to see the figures for death and serious injuries in South Yorkshire for road traffic accidents was not good and was not good when compared with others nationally.

Councillor Haleem confirmed this would continue to be scrutinised.

42. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

Question 1: Councillor Hoddinott:

Given the new statutory guidance on school uniforms to make things cheaper and easier for parents, it was disappointing to see issues at the start of the new term. Who could intervene to ensure schools were complying?

Councillor Cusworth responding indicating that non-statutory guidance was issued in June 2023 by the Government to be read alongside the previous statutory guidance around the cost of uniforms from 2021. Both put more emphasis on governing bodies with regard to uniform being more affordable.

In the first instance any issues should be raised with trustees and/or school governors who had responsibility to ensure that all policies and statutory guidance was followed. Governors should take account of affordability when approving policies and ensure they were fit for purpose and the guidance was considered. Should any complaints need to be raised regarding this a form was available on the Government website.

Thankfully uniform banks were now being used by many without as much taboo as historically seen, often with swops taking place.

In her supplementary Councillor Hoddinott noted that the Youth Cabinet were considering the cost of school uniforms and uniform banks, and this would be considered as part of the Children's Take Over Challenge. It was queried if the Cabinet Member would be supporting them with this issue?

Councillor Cusworth clarified that the Youth Cabinet would be supported.

Question 2: Councillor Tinsley:

The School Crossing Patrol Service celebrated 70 Years in England this year. While Unison promoted earlier on in the year their everyday action hero's, which included Maltby's very own Lollipop Lady Sandy who was turned into a 3d printed action Hero. Would the Service in Rotherham be celebrating the 70th Anniversary and recognising their contribution in theBborough?

Councillor Cusworth said she was pleased to meet Sandy. She noted that Facilities Services had recognised the anniversary in February. A commemorative badge was issued to complement their uniform, along with a letter of recognition being sent to all employees as a gesture of thanks for their continued dedication to their role.

In his supplementary Councillor Tinsley noted the dangers school crossing patrols faced and asked if the Council took staff and children's road crossing safety seriously?

Councillor Cusworth responded saying road safety was taken very seriously, which was why road traffic schemes were rolled out. She explained that every near miss was reported back in. Consideration had been given to wardens wearing body cameras, however, it was deemed inappropriate.

Question 3: Councillor A Carter:

Would the Cabinet Member assure him that any Council plans to undertake moving traffic enforcement on Wood Lane in Brinsworth, would not apply when the 3 other road routes out of Brinsworth were blocked due to flooding, and signage be put up to that effect?

A written response would be provided to this question.

Question 4: Councillor A Carter:

Following the in-year reduction in district heating charges, meaning that residents were paying less for their energy, could the Council confirm to him that they would reimburse residents who had overpaid so far this financial year and commit to doing so within the next month?

Councillor Allen noted it was the Council's intention that all District Heating customers, would by the end of November 2023 have received the appropriate credit to their account. The majority of customers had already received their credit.

In his supplementary Councillor A Carter noted that whilst the credit was on their account, it would not be given back to them in cash terms until June and he queried if this was the case then could a review be carried out to ensure that the money was available to residents quicker.

Councillor Allen explained there were 35 residents who had yet to receive their credit due to problems with their meters, but she hadn't come across a request for a cash refund. At the moment it was being issued as a credit to their account to ensure it was there in time for winter. She was happy to discuss the potential for refunds with officers. Councillor A Carter would provide details of the instance to Councillor Allen.

Question 5: Councillor Mills:

112 identified Council cameras had been offline since June, why had it taken the Council 5 months to upgrade the SIM cards?

Councillor Alam noted that due to increases in costs with the current supplier, and the need to comply with financial regulations, officers had been required to source a new provider for the sim cards and arrange for installation. In addition, each camera required reprogramming with new software to enable the sim cards to work and additional security measures had been implemented to improve security and access to the systems. This upgrade required technical CCTV specialists to undertake the work

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and therefore this support had to be sourced and obtained externally, therefore, it was not as easy as perhaps it sounded.

The Sim upgrade on the 112 cameras was expected to be completed by the end of October, with a third completed to date and cameras that had received the upgrade were now back on-line.

In his supplementary Councillor Mills expressed disappointment that the situation was this bad and asked if more were due to be upgraded in the near future.

Councillor Alam clarified that a third of the cameras had been upgraded with the remaining due to be upgrade by the end of October.

Question 6: Councillor Mills:

How much had it cost the taxpayer for a contractor to upgrade the SIM cards and why was it not done in house?

Councillor Alam explained the sim cards had to be replaced as the contract term was expiring. Had the Council not carried out this essential work, the cameras would not be accessible remotely.

The Council was unable to provide a full breakdown of costs at this time as work remained ongoing, as each unit was inspected and there were some units needing additional work to be upgraded. This figure would be available at the end of the project when the full costings for the work could be provided.

The work undertaken to upgrade and re-programme the cameras, and security systems, required specialist knowledge and expertise, Rotherham Council did not require these specialists with this level of technical expertise on a full-time basis and this type of activity had always been outsourced to an external company.

In his supplementary Councillor Mills said he felt the Council had delayed identifying the need for the upgrade and would it be reasonable for an apology to be issued for the delay.

Councillor Alam explained that the technology was coming to the end of the contract so there was a need to renew and update it. It was hard to do this initially and the requested information would be provided at the end of the project.

Question 7: Councillor Ball:

The pocket park in the town centre was back on the agenda, could you let me know how much this had increased in costs from then and now?

Councillor Lelliott noted that the scheme had increased from £1m to £1.92m due to increased costs of demolition and remediation of the former Primark site.

The budget for the scheme was £1m Town Deal and £350,000 from the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and £570,000 from the Council's capital.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball felt that a good deal should have been secured in the first instance and queried why the Council should be trusted to deliver if the charges were being increased?

Councillor Lelliott explained that the redevelopment of Forge Island had been possible through sound investment and planning.

Question 8: Councillor Ball:

What analysis had been done by the Council to support having a pocket park in the middle of the High Street?

Councillor Lelliott explained that consultation carried out between 2019 and 2022 on the Council's plans for improving public realm and open space in the town centre had consistently indicated that Rotherham residents wished to see more greenery and open spaces in the town centre.

To quote just one resident "I welcome more open green space within the Rotherham town centre. There were many historic and beautiful buildings in that area that were overshadowed by dilapidated and not-so-nice buildings. This space would give people of the surrounding area a place to enjoy that architecture. Also, as it was more open, it was less daunting walking through the town centre."

The Council's investment in public realm and open space was in direct response to resident's wishes to see the town centre revitalised.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball asked why the available funding was not being used on upgrading other parks in the Borough such as Coronation Park. He queried why a new one would be built when others needed upgrading?

In response Councillor Lelliott stated that the consultation indicated that the public wanted a pocket park. The Council was regenerating spaces, making them more dynamic in accordance with the views of residents.

Question 9: Councillor Mills:

After recent ASB at Thrybergh Country Park would the Council commit to supplying body cameras to Park Rangers to better protect themselves and the general public?"

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Councillor Sheppard thanked Councillor Mills for his concern about the issues faced by Park Rangers. Unfortunately, issues of anti-social behaviour did occasionally occur. The Council had staff who wore body worn cameras such as some Enforcement Staff in Community Protection, subject to the nature of their duties and the assessed risks.

At this time, the Council was working jointly between Green Spaces, Community Safety and South Yorkshire Police to understand the scale and frequency of the problems, as well as their root causes and would consider the most appropriate interventions and keep under review whether body worn cameras were warranted.

In his supplementary Councillor Mills acknowledged that it was positive news that this was being reviewed, however, some Park Rangers were recording instances on their phones, which could create more attention. He asked again if this could be reconsidered?

Councillor Sheppard reiterated that this was being reviewed but also stated the desire to ensure parks were welcoming and friendly places for people to visit, therefore, the impact of cameras would need to be assessed.

Councillor Ball queried if it was a breach of GDPR regulations if Park Rangers were recording incidents on their phones.

The Monitoring Officer indicated that this was a separate matter and would be responded to outside of the meeting.

Question 10: Councillor Ball:

What were the projections on how many additional visitors to the High Street a pocket park would bring and what was the economic benefit to the town centre?

Councillor Lelliott explained that the 'pocket park' scheme had removed a building which had sat vacant in a prominent position on the High Street for 4 years. The closing of Primark was estimated to have reduced footfall along the High Street by as much as 40%. The scheme removed the liability of a large, difficult to let retail unit in which the private sector market clearly had no interest, from this prominent town centre location and created an opportunity for future development more suited to today's climate.

In the meantime, the 'pocket park' itself would provide more reason for town centre users to visit the High Street and the businesses operating in this location. It was estimated that the scheme would increase footfall by 20% above 2020 levels.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball asked if the scheme did not reach the predicted numbers, would the Council apologise?

Councillor Lelliott said she had every confidence that it would reach those targets.

Question 11: Councillor Mills:

How many small road safety schemes were ready to be carried out and what was the average wait time for works to be carried out?

A written response would be provided to this question.

Question 12: Councillor Mills:

What were the Council doing to ensure residents in Council-ran care Homes stayed warm this winter?

Councillor Roche indicated all Council-run care homes had central heating systems installed to ensure an optimal temperature. The temperature was set to reflect the current season and was informed by weather alerts for adverse conditions. All heating systems were serviced annually, and daily building temperature checks were completed to ensure that the building remained at a constant, optimum temperature.

During the winter period, summer tog rated quilts were replaced with a higher tog rated replacement as well as additional blankets and throws being available for residents. Hot water bottles were not used due to the potential health and safety risks these could pose.

All Council-run care homes had robust business continuity plans in place to mitigate against adverse weather for both hot and cold weather conditions. Ensuring that our buildings were at the optimum temperature was a priority for the Council as it ensured the environment supported people to regain their independence and improve wellbeing.

In his supplementary Councillor Mills indicated that he had recently spoken with a resident who had indicated how cold they were and when raised they were only offered a thin blanket. The new starter had indicated nothing further was available at that time. He sought assurance that training would be provided for all new starters to address this.

Councillor Roche acknowledged that everyone had different perceptions of hot and cold. He had investigated this instance with the Service and was assured that it had been resolved. He indicated that this question related to casework and should not have been raised in this manner, where individuals may be identified.

Question 13: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Pedestrian visitors to Thrybergh Country Park using the main entrance had to walk part of the way on a road with no extra reduction in speed limit. When would we expect an entranceway where those on foot, using wheelchairs or pushing buggies, would be separated from road traffic into the Park?

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Councillor Sheppard explained that unfortunately, the funding secured for the Country Park did not stretch to this request for an entrance that was separated from the road, however, the Council would ensure this was considered for any future proposals and funding bids for the Park.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester indicated his disappointment regarding the scaling back of proposals for the Park but asked in the meantime if options such as a speed reduction be considered, along with additional signage and the option of a temporary surface to use as a footpath on the verges?

Councillor Sheppard indicated he would work with officers to ensure there was a safe and welcoming environment to the country parks.

Question 14: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

The failure to move the car park at Thrybergh Country Park meant the play area move discussed in consultation could not take place. When could we now expect a replacement play area at the Park?

Councillor Sheppard indicated they had hoped that the relocation of the play facilities could have been achieved as part of the Levelling Up funded project, however, this had not been possible due to cost constraints. Fortunately, the existing play area was not impacted.

As part of his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said that over the years he had noticed the water sports facility being removed from Thrybergh Country Park along with other activities only for them to then be developed at Rother Valley County Park, he felt this may indicate favouritism towards some areas.

Councillor Sheppard clarified that there was no favouritism, all parks were valued and would be invested in when the possibility to do so arose.

Question 15: Councillor Mills:

What was the policy on Councillors doing work in other Members' Wards?

Councillor Allen clarified that Members were not expected to be proactively seeking work in other Members' Wards. However, if a Member was approached by a resident with some casework who did not live in your Ward, you could direct that resident to the relevant member for their ward or you could pick it up and action it, but it was incumbent that you advise the relevant Member of what you have received and what action had been taken.

She also explained that as the Leader and Cabinet Members held a Borough-wide portfolio they would work across the Borough in terms of discharging those responsibilities.

In his supplementary Councillor Mills indicated that it had been mentioned in a previous meeting that Councillors represented everyone, and he sought clarity.

In response, Councillor Allen said that if a resident of the Borough approached any Member of the authority, then it was their duty as a public servant to assist that resident whilst giving courtesy to the relevant Ward Member.

Question 16: Councillor Ball:

Could you provide me with the sickness levels RMBC currently had?

Councillor Alam said the Council's sickness absence rate for August 2023 was 12.63 average working days lost per FTE.

This information was included in the Council's regularly performance reports to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, where Members had the opportunity to scrutinise those figures.

Question 17: Councillor Ball:

How many job vacancies were left unfilled at this present time?

Councillor Alam explained that vacancy information was held at Service level as part of the budget monitoring process but was not currently reported on centrally.

However, to give an indication of the current vacancy position, as of Friday 29th September, the Council had 59 live adverts for vacancies advertised externally and 2 jobs being advertised internally.

The 59 external adverts equated to 103 current vacancies that were being advertised and 2 of the adverts were rolling recruitment campaigns for Social Workers in Adult Care and Children's Services.

This equated to around 2% of the Council's overall headcount and was in line with the latest annual turnover rate of 10.98%.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball noted he felt things were taking a long time to do at the moment and he felt some Members were having to trail back through emails to find information relating to casework to ascertain how long it had been in progress for.

Councillor Alam indicated this would be picked up with Democratic Services and a response provided in writing.

Question 18: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester

When would the full resurfacing of the path take place of the path around Thrybergh Country Park?

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Councillor Sheppard noted that whilst there was a desire to improve the path around the Country Park, this required significant capital investment. Opportunities to fund this provision would continue to be explored.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester noted that at the same meeting as approval for funding for this scheme was agreed, another item was approving funding for other non-Council owned properties. He felt we should be ensuring our own properties were supported in the first instance.

Councillor Sheppard stated that whilst the Council was very happy to have secured the Levelling Up bids from Central Government, it was clarified that there was only so much the Council could do with that funding. The Council was keen to get as much investment in as it could and would always work to ensure the Council's facilities were the best they could be for residents; it was working within constrained means.

Question 19: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Who was the "we" you refer to in a RMBC social media post of 11th September regards the unveiling of a blue plaque to Arthur Wharton and what role did you and RMBC play in the unveiling?

Councillor Sheppard explained he was invited by Rotherham Civic Society to the unveiling of the blue plaque for Arthur Wharton which they had organised. To his mind the "we" in this case was Rotherham. The plaque was to celebrate Arthur and draw attention to a citizen of our Borough who we were all proud of and glad to celebrate.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester noted that others had put a lot of work into the project and felt those people had not been properly recognised. He sought assurance that if anything of this sort progressed again that those outside groups would be properly recognised.

Councillor Sheppard noted the event had been organised by the Rotherham Civic Society and the Mayor was present as the Council's civic representative at the event.

Question 20: Councillor Ball:

Could the Leader of the Council make a statement on how RMBC planned to mitigate the traffic chaos in and out of Maltby on Bawtry Road caused by several ongoing developments and road layout changes?

A written response would be provided to this question.

Question 21: Councillor Ball:

Would the Leader of the Council commit to helping secure the future of Maltby Miners' Community Recreation Ground for future generations of Maltby residents?

The Leader said he was aware of concerns in the Maltby community about the much-loved facility. He did not know what intervention Councillor Ball had in mind but on behalf of the Borough Council he was happy to take representations to the Town Council to consider what may or not be able to be done.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball said there had been recent examples of another ground that had been sold off for a housing development and he was seeking assurance that the Council did not want to lose this as a Maltby asset. He asked the Leader to do everything in his power to save the site.

The Leader clarified that he did not want the site to be lost either, however, he did not know what may be able to be done. He knew there had been concerns regarding the capital receipt received that then was not invested in the community and he thought this may be a bigger issue than the Council was able to deal with but understood the frustration. If Councillor Ball knew of particular things that he or the Town Council felt the Council should be doing, then he was very happy to have that conversation.

Question 22: Councillor Mills:

How much had it cost the Taxpayer to sort out Eastwood's rat infestation and how many rats had been caught to date?

Councillor Allen explained that the cost of the baiting programme was just under £60,000 and the number of rats caught would be available over the coming weeks as the information was being gathered by multiple teams and would be provided when available.

In his supplementary Councillor Mills said he had previously suggested that communal bins may assist in some streets to help reduce the problem. How did Councillor Allen think that communal bins would help to reduce the rat infestation and help clean up the streets?

Councillor Allen said that prior to implementing the baiting programme a lot of debate was held around the conditions that would make it successful. Part of those conditions was around removal of waste that was already present and around an education programme with residents on how they could work with the Council to understand what the current refuse collections were. The consideration of communal bins was on hold to await the outcome of the current programme.

Question 23: Councillor Reynolds:

At our last full Council Meeting Councillor Beck promised to report back to the next meeting with an update on how successful Recycling had been since the new system had been launched, e.g., what contribution had separate waste made compared to the earlier waste arrangements.

A written response would be provided to this question.

Question 24: Councillor Ball:

What were the plans for the big empty space at Riverside once the Library moved out?

Councillor Lelliott explained that it was not expected that the Library at Riverside House would transfer across to the new Library site until September 2025 at the earliest. Therefore, at this point final decisions on future usage had not been confirmed.

Question 25: Councillor Mills:

Did the Council recognise the need for a reduction in speed on Moor Lane North, outside Ravenfield Primary School, to a 30 mph from a 40 mph?

A written response would be provided to this question.

Question 26: Councillor Ball:

Should an impartial council be liking, sharing, retweeting and commenting on a politicians x account?

The Leader said that if the content supported the Council's objectives and was not party political in the nature of that content and particularly in the circumstances where a national politician came to the Borough to support it in a major piece of investment and delivery, then yes, it was acceptable and applicable.

In his supplementary Councillor Ball noted that it was a Council invite and he understood it was a Cabinet Member who sent the invitation to the MP; he asked where and when would that invitation be shared with all Members for their information?

The Leader indicated he did not know where the trail of correspondence around this was or where the conversation took place and as the relevant member was not present no further information could be provided.

Question 27: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

The North Area Housing team had been severely understaffed for several months with his Ward having just 2 of its usual 3 Area Housing Officers in position. When would this staffing crisis be resolved?

Councillor Allen explained that the recruitment of 3 new staff had taken place and staff had and were returning from sickness so he should already have seen some improvements but if not, he definitely would over the next few weeks.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester expressed concerns regarding the workload for these officers in some Wards and asked if the workload was apportioned equally across the team?

Councillor Allen noted it had been 18 months since the Service had reviewed the distribution of its officers across the Borough. She would speak with Housing Management to seek reassurance that work was as balanced as it could be.

Question 28: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

When would the first opportunity arise to bring the Council's Housing Repairs and Housing Caretaking Services back in-house?

Councillor Allen noted the current contract was for another 2 years and if it was decided to bring the contract back in house it would take until 2027 at the earliest.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester noted that services were usually brought back in-house due to failings and queried if the Council should be considering the long-term benefits of re-establishing service in-house as a matter of principle.

Councillor Allen indicated she supported that view in principle.

Question 29: Councillor Ball:

Did the Leader of the Council support the South and West Yorkshire Mayors in wanting HS2 being built right through our Borough?

The Leader said he had checked what the 2 mayors had said and did not believe it was what they had said. He said what they had called for was the full construction of HS2 through to Manchester and for routes to extend north from the East Midlands Parkway through up to Leeds, which was the position the Council had advocated for from the beginning. No-one wanted to see the M18 route being built through the Borough and thought there were no advantages and were clear disadvantages, which was understood by both Mayors. Following the recent announcement, the Council would be looking at if the full benefits of that would reach residents; he was conscious for example the safeguarding land issue was not resolved 18 months ago, therefore, the Council would need to wait for further information before all became clear.

Question 30: Councillor Tinsley:

Was Access to Primary Health a material consideration in Planning?

Councillor Atkin explained that Primary Health was recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework, so if health implications had been identified as a relevant issue, access to health services could be taken into account as a material consideration when making Planning decisions.

However, it was important to note that the weight to be attached to any material consideration was a matter of judgement for the Local Planning Authority. Provided that the Planning Authority had regard to all material considerations, it was required to give them whatever weight the Planning Authority thought it fit or no weight at all.

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To give this important issue more emphasis, the Council had also adopted a Supplementary Planning Document for 'Developer Contributions', which acknowledged that 'Local Primary Care Provision' could form part of a developer contribution via a Section 106 Agreement if there was an identified need.

In his supplementary he asked if Councillors on the Planning Board should be empowered to stick up for the access to local health services such as doctors and should they feel that they can challenge information provided even if its representation by the NHS saying that local provision was sufficient.

Councillor Atkin asked if what was being suggested was that Councillors on the Planning Board should disregard information provided by health experts, so if a health expert said no identified need then Councillors disagree and insist on it.

It did crop up on a recent planning application and one of the things the Health Authority said was that housing developments were built in stages and not all built at the same time. He said that he had moved house 3 times and stayed with the same doctor.

Question 31: Councillor Tinsley:

Why was it taking so long to receive consultation materials for the Maltby High Street towns and Villages fund Project?

Councillor Allen explained the Maltby High Street Development proposal was approved by Cabinet in August. Derivative consultation materials were being developed to be used in a number of forums throughout November. This was a major project and deserved due care and attention.

Councillor Allen felt that the proposal could do with moving faster and agreed to undertake a conversation.

In his supplementary he said it seemed to be delay after delay after delay with only 3 meetings taking place with officers. It was noted that there was local concern, and they wanted to feed into the project but there was a delay and information wasn't filtering through.

Councillor Allen noted that she had attended one Ward meeting to discuss and would be happy to attend a future one. All were in her diary, and she would attend the next with officers to update.

Question 32: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Considering the current climate emergency what estimates had been done regards any increase in vehicle emissions from a move to have staff who could work from home to spending 3 days in the office?

Councillor Alam explained during Covid over half the Council were still in work due to the nature of their jobs. Subsequently there was a policy that allowed staff who were more flexible to work from home or office bases. It had always been the informal position that staff work in Borough for 3 days a week as delivering the best possible services for residents was always the priority. The recent Working Locations Policy had formalised the position.

Therefore, estimates had not been undertaken on emissions as over half the staff were travelling to a location and many staff were already working 3 days a week from a base in the Borough. Approximately 50% of the workforce lived within the Borough so staff did tend to walk, cycle or use public transport.

In his supplementary he raised concerns around staff welfare around moving to 3 days working and had other reservations. Surely the logical conclusion should be that, if someone could work from home and this did not affect the service, that was better in terms of vehicle emissions generally than anything else. With the Climate Emergency being the largest threat to ourselves as a society and this Council having declared a climate emergency should we not be enabling staff who wished to work from home and not contribute to vehicle emissions to do this and have a choice to work from office or home.

Councillor Alam confirmed when it was decided if officers come in it depended upon service provision and the needs of residents, so all these considerations were taken into account.

Question 33: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Do crews emptying litter bins count bags of domestic rubbish left next to bins as small fly tips?

Councillor Beck was not present to respond to this question. A written response would be provided.

Question 34: Councillor Tinsley:

The Government had launched a £1M Defibrillator Grants Scheme. Would the Council be applying for both fully funded defibrillators and part-funded ones. Where this could be placed for example in the Town Centre to expand the current provision.

Councillor Roche confirmed that he supported the general points behind the question and confirmed the need to ensure full coverage across the Borough and look for funding from appropriate sources. He noted that several Ward Councillors had funded defibrillators in their own Wards. He said in his Ward 8 had been funded or part-funded.

The Council was aware of the DHSC Community Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Fund and would give consideration to application(s) with our partners. Evidence highlighted that there was unequal distribution

of AED devices within communities and a need to improve access within deprived and rural communities, and that where possible devices should be located where there was high footfall.

As the location of devices was a key factor in maximising the benefits that they offered it was important that consideration was given to the location of existing devices within the Borough and available locations for further devices. With partners we would consider opportunities within both the Council and wider partner estate and support the most appropriate application(s) to improve access to devices for residents.

In his supplementary Councillor Tinsley had nothing to disagree with and welcomed them across the Borough. He asked for the grant information to be made available to Members and stakeholders across the Borough.

Councillor Roche confirmed that the information was usually provided by the Strategic Director, and he agreed to take the request back to the appropriate Director.

Question 35: Councillor Tinsley:

Home Analogue phone lines were being phased out by 2025 with digital lines taking their place. What effect would this have on the Rothercare alarm system.

Councillor Roche explained the Rothercare service was being reviewed with a paper expected to be brought to Cabinet.

He said this was being managed as part of the overall Council switch over. Digital services were working with Adult Social Care to support the best solutions for customers as Rothercare services move off the analogue system and transition to a digital solution.

There would not be any direct impact on the delivery of Rothercare services as it was currently implementing a replacement programme to be completed by the December 2025 deadline. This digital switchover would see the traditional analogue lines decommissioned and replaced by a fully digital infrastructure.

All new Rothercare customers were receiving the new digital units and existing customers would receive the new equipment by the deadline.

Impact on customers would be minimal consisting of a pre-arranged visit to remove existing equipment and fit the new equipment. The new equipment would be demonstrated to the customer, and the property would be left neat and tidy. The new equipment would no longer require the use of a landline. There was no charge to the customer for providing the new equipment and switchover, and existing charging arrangements remained in place subject to a review of the Rothercare Policy.

In his supplementary he said it would go to a Sim Card device as digital did not work when the power was turned off. So Vodaphone said.

He referred to a case where the service had been rolled over within 3 days and said if the programme was to complete by 2025 this was a good service.

Councillor Roche was pleased that some constituents found the service roll out to be well run and offered for Members to get in touch with him if there were issues with the roll out.

Question 36: Councillor Bacon:

Speaking to residents around Aston and Todwick I noted their many concerns for roads such as the Red Lion roundabout at Todwick, Worksop Road in Aston and Mansfield Road in Aston leading to east Swallownest. Would the Cabinet Member support me in my local Neighbourhood Safety Fund bid so the Council could finally look at ways to improve these roads?

Councillor Beck was not present to respond to this question. A written response would be provided.

Question 37: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

To misquote Daphne and Celeste U.G.L.Y. we ain't got no alibi they ugly. Who made the decision that "Beirut Blocks" were a good look for Rotherham Town Centre?

Councillor Lelliott advised that Town Centre Events were required to implement counter-terrorism measures which were approved by the Rotherham Events Safety Advisory Group (RESAG) which included measures to prevent attacks from hostile vehicles known as HVM (Hostile Vehicle Mitigation). Whilst unsightly, those blocks were a necessary part of ensuring that thousands of residents who enjoy the Town Centre Events programmes were kept safe.

The blocks were originally put in place to support the Yorkshire Day activities which took place on 1st August but a series of events throughout August for Yorkshire Day were hosted. In addition, there were many events coming up including Christmas. It was therefore decided to keep the blocks in situ until 4th January 2024 because it was more cost-effective to keep them there than bring back for Winter events. Saving approximately £4,000. The blocks did need to be in place as a Counter Terrorism measure.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said that they looked bad and referred to the solution implemented during the Women's Euros with metal gates and barriers. He asked why this could not be brought back?

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Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said there were great ideas for the Town Centre, but we kept mis-queuing on delivery. Late on delivery for Forge Island and for costs. Then seeing issues with the Bus Station, Bridge Gate. He asked what the impact would be and suggested asking retailers what it would look like for visitors.

Councillor Lelliott explained whilst it might look unsightly it had been seen where, especially around Christmas abroad, people had taken vans and utilised them as weapons so it was necessary to think what would happen if something did happen.

Councillor Lelliott took his point that they may look unsightly but noted that feedback from local businesses was that they would like to see permanent measures in place. However, it would be at a significant cost.

Councillor Lelliott confirmed that a Cross-Party Working Group would be established to look at proposals. Councillor Lelliott agreed to confirm when the Working Group was set up with Councillor Bennett-Sylvester.

Question 38: Councillor Burnett:

Our recent Sitwell Ward newsletter was to include a picture of local MP Alexander Stafford and a Ward Councillor attending a public meeting at St Cuthberts. The publication of this was rejected by RMBC, can you explain the process of rejecting this?

Councillor Allen explained to all Members in the Chamber that guidance had been in place for a number of years surrounding the production of newsletters and other Ward publications. This was all aimed at being apolitical. She confirmed that the guidance referenced would be added to the next Member Briefing so all could have a look at what it said.

Councillor Allen offered reassures that had this been an event at St Mary's in Greasbrough and Councillor Allen had arrived with Sarah Champion MP and had a photograph taken whilst Councillor Elliott was at the alter etc. this would have also been rejected as it was very much around those documents not being turned into a form of propaganda.

In his supplementary Councillor Burnett referred to an earlier question to the Leader that RMBC sharing via social media and publicising a visit by the Oldham MP and the benefit of this. He did not understand why when there had been no objection from the Labour Councillor in the Ward, the Neighbourhoods Team obtaining the communications themselves. What were your views on the message this gave to Members on this side and the publication about the Council being apolitical if we could not publish our own MP when 2 of the 3 ward councillors were Conservative as well. He didn't feel this was fair.

Councillor Allen offered a message for all Members on both sides of the Chamber. Ward Newsletters were about promoting the work within communities of local Councillors and what we as local Councillors were

doing and deliver. She noted that had the article remained an article about what you and your colleagues had done in Sitwell at St Cuthberts at the event it would have been fine. She referred back to St Mary's and Greasbrough and said if she had written an article and got herself a picture with Sarah Champion MP this would not have been fair so it was about celebrating what Councillors did and the picture should have been of the Ward Members.

Question 39: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

When could we expect the Council's CCTV estate to be back fully functioning following the SIM card upgrade issue?

Councillor Alam explained that it would be end of October.

In his supplementary he raised concerns that there were issues around this that could have been predicted before the issue arose e.g., SIM card replacement. He said that some of the things he had heard were stereotypical of some of the things that people hold regarding local government and the way things work. He had 2 concerns:

- Possible danger to public safety. If there had been an incident where evidence could have been gathered by a camera being out of action. Who would be held responsible?
- What action was being taken to review the situation to ensure this did not happen again and to learn lessons for the future?

Councillor Alam noted the concerns and explained that learning would be captured in terms of how services could be improved in the future and confirmed the need to capture the evidence if serious about prosecuting people.

Question 40: Councillor Tinsley:

Why was only the Cenotaph at Clifton Park Rotherham included within the Dignity Contract for repairs/maintenance when Rotherham Borough Council was also the guardian for other cenotaphs like the one at Maltby for example?

Councillor Alam explained there were no cenotaphs included in the Dignity contract other than the one in Moorgate Cemetery which was in the Cemetery.

He confirmed that Dignity was not responsible for the cenotaph at Clifton Park or Maltby.

In his supplementary Councillor Tinsley asked what had been the decision to include Moorgate Cemetery in the contract?

Councillor Alam confirmed that it was in the Cemetery.

Question 41: Councillor Tinsley:

With the potential that a large majority of current Scrutiny Chairs would be standing down and maybe even would not be reselected at the next election, would Labour be open to the possibility that Chair roles should be offered across the room to all parties.

The Leader thanked Councillor Tinsley for the assumption that they were going to be able to make a decision next year. He explained that he was unable to promise the role of Chairs after the election although they were reviewed from time to time. He noted that at the current time there were 10 Opposition unfilled vacancies on Scrutiny, so he urged colleagues across the Chamber to fill those roles and play a full part in it to make those conversations easier.

In his supplementary he said whatever experience in the room he was glad to hear open to the suggestion.

43. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.