

NOTICE OF MOTION	Date of Council Meeting: 22/04/26
	Mover: Councillor Yasseen
	Seconded: Councillor Bower
	Title of Motion: First Citizen - Strengthening Public Confidence in Civic Leadership

This Council notes that:

1. The offices of Mayor and Deputy Mayor are civic roles, constitutionally intended to be non-political civic roles, with those appointed the 'First Citizens' of the borough. In this capacity, they are expected to represent the whole Council and all Rotherham residents, reflecting the whole borough rather than any individual political group.
2. National civic guidance and established local government practice expect holders of these offices to act in a fair, impartial and non-partisan manner while undertaking their duties.
3. The Council's Constitution provides for an open nomination and annual election process, but does not prescribe how political groups or non-aligned members should approach these appointments.
4. In practice, the absence of any agreed cross-party and non-aligned members convention or protocol means that the outcome of Mayor and Deputy Mayoral nominations is determined by the majority political group through its voting majority
5. This has created a disconnect between:
 - the stated expectation of political neutrality, and
 - the perception that the 'First Citizen' role is controlled through party-political majority.
6. A number of local authorities have addressed this tension through agreed cross-party arrangements, including provision for non-aligned members
 - rotation systems between political groups (e.g. Worcester City Council)
 - proportional or agreed sharing arrangements (e.g. Bury Metropolitan Borough Council)
 - or cross-party civic pairings in practice (e.g. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council).
7. These approaches strengthen public confidence by ensuring that the office of 'First Citizen' visibly reflects Rotherham and the whole Council, rather than any single political group or non-aligned member.

That this Council believes that:

1. Civic roles must not only be politically neutral in function but also be seen to be neutral in how they are allocated.
2. Reliance solely on majority voting, without any balancing convention, risks:
 - undermining the perceived independence of the 'First Citizen' role,
 - reducing a civic office to a political outcome, and
 - weakening public confidence in the integrity of our civic institutions
3. Ensuring fairness in civic appointments is not about advantage for any group, but about upholding the dignity, integrity and credibility of the office itself.
4. An inclusive approach to the Mayoralty and Deputy Mayoralty would:
 - better reflect the diversity of representation within the chamber,
 - demonstrate institutional maturity, and
 - align this Council with recognised good practice across local government.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Request the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with Group Leaders and non-aligned members, to develop and present options for a formal cross-party protocol, inclusive of non-aligned members governing the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
2. Ensure that these options include:
 - a rotation model between political groups and non-aligned members
 - a proportional or agreed allocation framework and
 - a presumption against continuous control of the Deputy Mayoralty by one political group without cross-party agreement.
3. Require that proposals explicitly consider examples of good practice from other councils and inclusive approaches to civic appointments, including Worcester City Council and Bury Metropolitan Borough Council.
4. Receive a report with recommendations ahead of the next Annual Council meeting, with a view to either:
 - adopting a formal protocol, or
 - incorporating agreed arrangements into the Constitution.