

BOROUGH OF RUSHMOOR

MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Farnborough on Thursday, 5th October, 2017 at 7.00 pm.

The Worshipful The Mayor (Cllr Sophia Choudhary (Chairman))
The Deputy Mayor (Cllr S.J. Masterson (Vice-Chairman))

Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford
Cllr T.D. Bridgeman
Cllr Sue Carter
Cllr D.E. Clifford
Cllr Liz Corps
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar
Cllr Sue Dibble
Cllr Jennifer Evans
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr B. Jones
Cllr J.H. Marsh
Cllr K.H. Muschamp
Cllr J.J. Preece
Cllr P.F. Rust
Cllr M.D. Smith
Cllr L.A. Taylor
Cllr M.J. Tennant
Cllr Jacqui Vosper

Cllr D.M.T. Bell
Cllr J.B. Canty
Cllr M.S. Choudhary
Cllr R.M. Cooper
Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr K. Dibble
Cllr R.L.G. Dibbs
Cllr D.S. Gladstone
Cllr Barbara Hurst
Cllr G.B. Lyon
Cllr Marina Munro
Cllr A.R. Newell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr M.L. Sheehan
Cllr M. Staplehurst
Cllr P.G. Taylor
Cllr B.A. Thomas
Cllr J.E. Woolley

Honorary Alderman C. Balchin
Honorary Alderman R.J. Debenham
Honorary Alderman R.J. Kimber
Honorary Alderman G.J. Woolger

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr A. Jackman.

Before the meeting was opened, Mr David Betts of the Aldershot Garrison Chaplaincy Team led the meeting in prayers.

26. MINUTES

It was MOVED by Cllr Barbara Hurst; SECONDED by Cllr D.E. Clifford and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27th July, 2017 (copy having been circulated previously) be taken as read, approved and signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

27. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) The Mayor reported that Merchant Navy Day had been marked at the Council Offices on 1st September, 2017 with a short service which had been led by

the Mayor's Chaplain, followed by the hoisting of the Red Ensign. The event had been attended by representatives of the Merchant Navy, Royal Navy, Royal British Legion and Councillors. The Red Ensign had been flown until the end of Sunday, 3rd September, 2017 which was Merchant Navy Day.

- (2) The Mayor advised that a charity cycle ride had taken place on 3rd September, 2017 around the Borough in aid of her charities. The Mayor expressed her gratitude to her Charity Fundraising Committee, the Rushmoor Cycle Forum and Naya Yuva for organising the event and to all those who had taken part. The event had been well supported and had raised £280 for her charities.
- (3) The Mayor reported that she and the Mayoress had had the honour of attending the Canal Zoners National Service of Remembrance on 10th September, 2017, which had been held at North Camp Methodist Church. The Mayor advised Members that Canal Zoners was an organisation for servicemen and women who had served in the Suez Canal Zone of Egypt in the late 1940s up to and including the Suez Crisis of 1956.
- (4) The Mayor reported that her Charity Golf Tournament had been held at Southwood Golf Course on 15th September, 2017 and had been supported by nineteen teams, including TAG Farnborough Airport, Aldershot Town Football Club, the Gurkha Golf Society, Fluor Ltd, the Meads Shopping Centre, Aspire Defence and the Royal School of Military Engineering. It was anticipated that the event would raise around £2,000 for her charities.
- (5) It was noted that Aldershot and Farnborough's best gardeners had been celebrated at the Rushmoor in Bloom presentation evening held at Princes Hall on 18th September, 2017. Awards had been presented in thirteen different categories, from Best Sports Ground to Best Newcomer. The Best Front Garden award had gone to Mr. Ken Howard of Field Way in Aldershot, the award for Best Sheltered Housing Complex had been won by Shaftesbury Court in Farnborough and the Best Kept Vivid Tenant's Garden had been awarded to Mr. Thomas Rogers of Basing Drive, Aldershot. The Best Community Garden had gone to the residents of Cheyne Way, Farnborough.

The Chairman's Award had been presented to the family of the late Mr. Brian Stephens, who had been a highly regarded supporter of Rushmoor in Bloom over many years and an Officer of the Council. Mr Stephens had won Rushmoor both the Southern England in Bloom Best Large Town/Small City category and the highest accolade of the Winner of National Britain in Bloom, beating many big towns and cities. His colourful, floral legacy remained throughout the Borough for all to see.

The Forum Award had gone to Honorary Alderman Mr. Colin Balchin because of his continued support for Rushmoor in Bloom and the amount of time he volunteered to help judge gardens and school entries. The Mayor's Award had gone to Hart and Rushmoor Wellbeing Centre in Victoria Road, Aldershot.

In the Schools' competition, there had been eight categories ranging from "Squire's Herb Pot" to "Bee Friendly". South Farnborough Infant School had won the Best School Grounds category and the Gardening for the Future category had been won by Henry Tyndale School in Farnborough.

- (6) The Mayor reported that she had attended the annual Battle of Britain Service of Remembrance at North Camp Methodist Church on 17th September. The Mayor had taken the salute at the march past of RAF Association members and representatives from the local Air Training Squadrons.
- (7) The Mayor advised Members of two forthcoming events in aid of the Mayor's Charities, about which further details would soon be available:
 - Christmas Afternoon Tea Party on 8th December 2017 at the Council Offices in Farnborough
 - Charity Ball on Friday, 9th March 2018 with a Bollywood Theme at Princes Hall in Aldershot.

28. **STANDING ORDER 8 - QUESTIONS**

The Mayor reported that one urgent question had been submitted under Standing Order 8 (3) by Cllr A.H. Crawford.

Cllr Crawford asked, with winter approaching, what arrangements the Council had in place that year to meet its statutory responsibility to provide Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) responses in order to prevent deaths of people sleeping rough, given that the Vine Centre had not been asked to provide the Emergency Winter Night shelter at Holy Trinity Church, Aldershot, for which Housing Justice had awarded its Quality Mark for night shelters the previous year.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Health and Housing (Cllr Barbara Hurst) stated that the Council had supported the winter night shelter in Aldershot for the previous four winters in partnership with the Vine Centre, community groups, local churches and the previous year with Hart District Council and Surrey Heath Borough Council. The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol came into force when temperatures reached freezing for three consecutive days.

Members were advised that, in recent months, the Council had taken legal action against several rough sleepers and had supported a 'hub' to address their needs. In 2017, the North Lane Lodge had opened providing nine beds for rough sleepers with drugs and alcohol problems and this accommodation was managed by the Society of St. James. Rushmoor therefore currently had between three and five rough sleepers in Aldershot. The Council continued to work with The Vine Day Centre, which provided a successful 'journey' programme for single homeless people and the Stonham Home Group, which provided assertive outreach in the Borough to engage and support rough sleepers to come in off the street and connect with those who did not have a local connection to the area. The Council was also strongly committed to 'No Second Night Out', which was a Government initiative focused on ending rough sleeping, specifically for those who were new to the streets.

It had been hoped that The Vine Centre would be able to develop a self-funding model to provide this facility going forward, however, this had proved impossible in the current financial situation. The Vine Centre had since changed its operating model and had moved away from working with people that had no desire to engage with its services to a more structured model based on customer engagement, which the Council fully supported.

It was felt that an alternative to the winter night shelter would be to rely on bed and breakfast accommodation. There were currently between three and five rough sleepers in Aldershot. Included in this number were those proving hard to engage and some waiting for specialist provision such as supported accommodation or North Lane Lodge.

Cllr. Hurst advised Members that the previous year, the winter night shelter had opened for 25 nights at a cost of £14,830. In comparison, it was noted that to provide bed and breakfast for 25 nights for five people would cost approximately £7,500, based on a cost of £60 per night. This was likely to be a worse-case scenario as North Lane Lodge and the outreach service were continuing to keep the numbers of rough sleepers low. The cost was therefore more likely to be nearer £3,000 and this could be met from the bed and breakfast budget.

It was noted that Surrey Heath Borough Council would be interested in providing funding for the winter night shelter on the same basis as in 2016 (£4,000). However, Hart District Council, which had contributed £4,000 in 2016 through the Department for Communities and Local Government Single Homelessness Project, would not be contributing in 2017 as it did not have the level of street homelessness needed to support the investment. To fund the winter night shelter in 2017 would cost Rushmoor approximately £11,000, for which there was currently no budget. It was considered that, in view of the reduced number of street homeless, the provision of North Lane Lodge and the lack of funding from Hart District Council, the most cost effective way of meeting statutory requirements under the SWEP would be to use bed and breakfast accommodation.

29. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

The Council was asked to consider two Motions which had been submitted in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 9 (1).

(1) **Universal Credit**

It was MOVED by Cllr Jennifer Evans; SECONDED by Cllr A.H. Crawford – That

“Recent reports by Citizens Advice and the Rowntree Foundation have highlighted problems associated with the roll-out of Universal Credit, which are leading to increases in debt, rent arrears, evictions and families in temporary accommodation.

In view of this, Rushmoor Borough Council calls upon HM Government to pause the implementation of Universal Credit immediately in order to introduce measures to avoid these problems and, in this way, protect our residents from them.”

In introducing the Motion, Cllr Evans stated that she felt that no one was opposed to the idea of simplifying the complicated benefits system and rolling up a number of benefits into one payment. She felt that, in theory, new technology should enable a more flexible and responsive system to be put in place.

Cllr Evans considered that there were a number of delays which had been built into the system. Firstly, new claimants had to wait one week after losing their job before they could apply. Secondly, applications could only be made online and, until an online application had been made, an appointment could not be made with Job Centre Plus to progress a claim. Even if computer literate, and a person had access to the internet, there was another wait that had been built into the system. However, she felt that the big delay, and the one which caused the most problems and anxiety for claimants was that there was a minimum wait of six weeks before the first payment could be made.

Cllr Evans advised that research by Citizens Advice had shown the effects of this on households. Its survey had showed that almost 40% of people waited more than six weeks for their first payment and that over half of claimants had to borrow money whilst waiting for their first payment. The research had also revealed that one quarter of people seeking advice from the CAB about Universal Credit had debt problems. Citizens Advice had called upon the Government to postpone the roll-out until the system was more robust.

Cllr Evans felt that the dangers of this delay for low-income families with no savings to tide them over were obvious. They would not be able to pay their rent on time, and thereby risking eviction. Private landlords, who provided a substantial number of homes in the area, were less likely to be sympathetic than housing associations and were likely to be less willing to rent to tenants on Universal Credit. It was understood that housing associations were worried about rent arrears and a drop in income as Universal Credit was rolled out. Rushmoor had one of the most effective housing benefit teams in the country, but this function would be handed over to staff in job centres and the time waited for payments would jump from a few days to at least six weeks. Cllr Evans posed the question what would families with children do about buying food, heating their homes, providing transport and all the other necessities of life during this minimum of six weeks without any income?

Cllr Evans referred to the fact that the Government had recently announced that claimants could apply for an advance payment, which would be given in the form of a loan, to be repaid, and that repayment would be taken from the first few months of the new payments. In order to get the loan, claimants had to ring a premium phone number, which could cost up to 40p per minute.

Cllr Evans stated that Universal Credit appeared to give more money to some claimants and less to others. The IFS had calculated that £2.7 billion would be cut from the benefit in the long run. Whilst 2.2 million people would gain on average about £1,400 per year, 3.2 million people were likely to lose £1,800 on average. The most likely to lose would be single parents, which was one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Research undertaken by the local CAB as part of a national survey had showed that most said that they could not manage if their benefits were

to be cut by that amount. Cllr Evans drew attention to the important link to the increased number of people suffering from mental health problems if this was the kind of worry and stress they had to put up with.

Cllr Evans further stated that former Welfare Minister, Lord Freud, had admitted that the design failures in Universal Credit were causing one in four low-income tenants to run up rent arrears and risk eviction. Meanwhile, the link between Universal Credit and lack of money for essentials, such as food, was so clear that in areas where the full roll-out had taken place, food bank referral rates were running at more than double the national average.

Cllr Evans stated that her Motion was not proposing that the Government should abandon Universal Credit. However, the Motion was asking that full roll-out should be paused in order for a robust evaluation of the impacts of the new system to be carried out and for any necessary amendments to be made. This was being requested to secure a smooth transition to the new benefit for residents and to avoid unnecessary hardship and homelessness.

In seconding the Motion, Cllr Crawford stated that, in 2016, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond MP, had announced cuts in welfare of £12 billion by 2019/20. The cuts to the work allowances in Universal Credit were now just nine months away for claimants in the Borough. This would focus cuts on families in work much more than those out of work, and would cost them an average of £1,000 per year each. He referred to the deficiencies in the Universal Credit system, which had been outlined by Cllr Evans, which would bring six types of benefit together, including Housing Benefit. Cllr Crawford stated that the current Rushmoor Universal Credit (Live Service) covered 438 single, unemployed jobseekers – some of whom took three or four hours of support to get through the process to obtain their correct payments. He advised that, from July 2018, ten times as many claimants of these six types of benefit in Rushmoor would be using the Universal Credit (Full Service) system, with the complex telephone and online processes that Cllr Evans had outlined. Cllr Crawford was of the opinion that this process would put thousands of residents at risk of rent arrears, debt and hunger. There was no shortage of evidence of the adverse effects of the Universal Credit (Full Service) system, because it had been piloted in other areas, and the outcomes reported to the current Inquiry of the Work and Pensions Committee of the House of Commons.

Cllr Crawford stated that Your Homes Newcastle, which managed homes on behalf of Newcastle City Council, was having to help struggling claimants to prevent them becoming homeless. Of the 3,293 Council house tenants in Newcastle in receipt of Universal Credit, 2,532 (or 77%) were in arrears amounting to £1.3 million more than they had been under the previous system.

Similarly, in Southwark, more than 4,000 tenants had moved over to the Universal Credit – Full Service system. Their rent arrears had also increased by £1.3 million. Southwark had reported that this had been caused by the length of time before people started receiving their payments, and particularly the housing element. Typically, people moving over were very often already in rent arrears. They did not have savings that they could call on, and they were having to wait a very long time. Rushmoor processed Housing Benefit claims in a few working days. In Southwark,

however, it was now taking 12-13 weeks for people to get their first payment of Universal Credit.

Cllr Crawford gave an example of one claimant he had dealt with at the Job Club at The Vine Centre who had been unfairly treated and sanctioned under the new Universal Credit system. He was of the opinion that the Universal Credit system, as it was now in the Borough, was inhumane and questioned how much worse it would get after the introduction of the full Universal Credit system in July, 2018. He asked the Council to support the Motion and call upon the Government to introduce measures to avoid these problems being placed on the Borough's residents.

During a debate, attention was drawn to the availability of the advance payment facility and also that arrangements could be made to make payments direct to landlords. It was also mentioned that the Council would continue to scrutinise and improve the local implementation of Universal Credit and helping residents with this. Further comment was also made of the need to understand fully what it was like to have no money and the implications for residents in such a situation.

Following further debate, the Motion was put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 12; AGAINST: 21 and the Motion was **DECLARED LOST**.

(2) **Social Value in Procurement**

It was MOVED by Cllr J.B. Canty and SECONDED by Cllr A. Newell – That

“This Council:

- Notes the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 which requires local authorities to consider how many services they procure might secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits for an area
- Recognises that embedding Social Value within contracts for goods and services can help drive positive outcomes for residents.

Therefore, this Council will strengthen the role of Social Value in procurement by:

- Giving Social Value greater weighting when scrutinising bids for future contracts in goods and services;
- Including a section on Social Value in the new Procurement Strategy; and
- Developing a Social Value Policy to underpin the new Procurement Strategy.”

In introducing the Motion, Cllr Canty stated that he felt procurement was one of the most important responsibilities that a local authority had. Assessing value for money was particularly important at a time when the Council's budget was constrained and assessing the quality of service was crucial for a contract to be delivered effectively. Cllr Canty was of the opinion that ensuring that a contract delivered added value or social value was also vital for delivering positive outcomes for the Borough beyond just the provision of a public service. Social value had

grown in popularity over the past decade because it provided a framework for decision makers to think about whether the services they were going to buy, or the way they were going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area. It had been enshrined in the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 that local authorities were required to consider how services they procured might secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits to an area. Rushmoor had been using social value in a variety of different ways in its procurement processes since the Act had become law. For example, in the waste management contract that had recently been awarded to Serco, the Council had identified a number of social value benefits that could be realised, such as apprenticeships, work experience and working with charity organisations. As part of its social value commitment, Serco had pledged to provide a minimum of ten one-day work experience placements for young people who were unemployed, a minimum of one day a year for staff to volunteer at local community projects and supporting community groups through the provision of materials and training.

Cllr Canty said that his Motion called for additional steps to strengthen and prioritise the role of social value as a criterion when assessing bids for goods and services. Firstly, the Motion called for greater weighting to be given to social value when scrutinising bids for contracts for goods and services. In practice, this would mean more clearly setting out social value aims as core requirements in specification and contract documents, which could then be referred to as contract requirements. Cllr Canty considered that writing more specific requirements into contract documents would challenge perspective suppliers to offer more in terms of social value. He also felt that it would make delivery and reporting on the implementation of contracts easier, allowing the Council to better demonstrate the social value each new contract was providing.

Cllr Canty stated that, secondly, the Motion called on social value to be embedded in the Council's new Procurement Strategy, which was due to be published in Spring, 2018. The Strategy would set out the Council's approach to the use of competition and how it would procure works, goods and services. He felt that including a section on social value would allow for a greater focus on considering how to structure contracts to reduce barriers to social enterprises and smaller companies from participating in public procurement processes. A suggested remedy could be to break up large contracts into smaller "lots" within each procurement exercise as a way to increase tender opportunities for these companies. Including a section on social value would also allow for greater focus on social outcomes which should be considered in procurement, such as: empowering social enterprises and charities to make an even bigger impact in supporting the most disadvantaged in the community; helping the long-term unemployed to get a foot on the employment ladder; providing disabled people with the opportunity to build their independence and develop new skills; and, increasing the use of local supply chains to support small and medium sized businesses in the Borough.

Cllr Canty considered that putting these principles at the heart of the new Procurement Strategy would highlight the Council's commitment to improving the quality of life for residents.

In respect of the final part of his Motion, Cllr Canty called on the Council to create a Social Value Policy to underpin the Procurement Strategy. Such a policy would allow the Council to set out before the general public what social outcomes were most important to the Council when evaluating tender bids. It would make clear the Council's expectations to potential suppliers and contractors that delivering social value to the community should be at the heart of the service they wished to deliver. It would provide the Council with leverage – where an explicit policy had been created it could also be used in the wording of a contract. Cllr Canty was of the opinion that such a policy could be developed in consultation with the voluntary sector providers and SMEs, to ensure that the Council could include outcomes that were realistic for the capability of those organisations. He felt that embedding social value in the Council's Procurement Strategy and developing a Social Value Policy would be very public statements of intent about the priority the Council gave to delivering social outcomes. Cllr Canty called on Members to support the Motion which sought to build on existing work to embed social value in the procurement process operated by the Council.

In seconding the Motion, Cllr A.J. Newell stated that social value encompassed several priorities of the Council covering environmental, social and economic wellbeing. Cllr Newell also mentioned that the Council already had in place a policy on sustainability as part of procurement and that a Social Value Policy as part of the Council's Procurement Strategy would be a further demonstration of the aims and priorities of the Council and this could be put into practice for future contracts such as the Alpine Ski Centre, Farnborough Leisure Centre and the Lido.

During discussion, Members referred to work by other councils who had gone down this route and that the Council needed to examine best practice elsewhere as part of a more comprehensive consideration of this subject.

It was **MOVED** by Cllr B. Jones and **SECONDED** by Cllr Keith Dibble – That the Motion be referred to the Corporate Services Policy and Review Panel for further consideration.

During discussion on the Motion for reference back to the Corporate Services Policy and Review Panel, Members agreed that there were many issues to be examined as part of social value and agreed that the Motion should be referred to the Corporate Services Policy and Review Panel. Others also spoke of whether the Council currently had the resources and expertise to carry out a corporate responsibility protocol. The amendment to refer to the Panel was then put to the meeting. There voted **FOR**: 14; **AGAINST**: 20 and the amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

Following further debate, the original Motion was then put to the meeting. There voted **FOR**: 32; **AGAINST**: 0 and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

30. **QUESTIONS FOR THE CABINET**

The Mayor reported that no questions had been submitted for the Cabinet.

31. **REPORTS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

(1) **Cabinet**

It was MOVED by Cllr D.E. Clifford; SECONDED by Cllr Barbara Hurst and

RESOLVED: That the Reports of meetings of the Cabinet held on 25th July, 22nd August and 19th September, 2017 be received.

(2) **Development Management Committee**

It was MOVED by Cllr B.A. Thomas; SECONDED by Cllr J.H. Marsh and

RESOLVED: That the Reports of meetings of the Cabinet held on 19th July, 16th August and 13th September, 2017 be received.

32. **REPORTS OF POLICY AND REVIEW PANELS**

RESOLVED: That the Reports of the undermentioned meetings of the Policy and Review Panels be received.

POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL	DATE OF MEETING
Leisure and Youth	4th September, 2017
Environment	5th September, 2017
Borough Services	11th September, 2017
Community	14th September, 2017

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.
