

BOROUGH OF RUSHMOOR

MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held via Microsoft Teams and streamed live on Thursday, 3rd December, 2020 at 7.00 pm.

The Worshipful The Mayor (Cllr M.S. Choudhary (Chairman))
The Deputy Mayor (Cllr B.A. Thomas (Vice-Chairman))

Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr T.D. Bridgeman
Cllr Sue Carter
Cllr A.K. Chowdhury
Cllr R.M. Cooper
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar
Cllr K. Dibble
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr L. Jeffers
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr K.H. Muschamp
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr M.L. Sheehan
Cllr P.G. Taylor
Cllr Jacqui Vosper

Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford
Cllr J.B. Canty
Cllr Sophia Choudhary
Cllr D.E. Clifford
Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr Veronica Graham-Green
Cllr Christine Guinness
Cllr Prabesh KC
Cllr J.H. Marsh
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Marina Munro
Cllr A.R. Newell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Calum Stewart
Cllr M.J. Tennant

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr A.J. Halstead and Cllr M.D. Smith.

Before the meeting was opened, the Mayor's Chaplain, the Reverend George Newton, led the meeting in prayers.

36. **MINUTES**

It was MOVED by Cllr D.E. Clifford; SECONDED by Cllr K.H. Muschamp and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 8th October, 2020 (copy having been circulated previously) be taken as read, approved and signed as a correct record.

37. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (1) The Mayor reported that, with circumstances having been so different this year with Covid-19 restrictions, he was very proud that Rushmoor had permission to organize a Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in Municipal Gardens on Remembrance Sunday. The wreath laying service had been led by the Mayor's Chaplain and was attended by Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire (Lt. Col. Sir Mark Mans), the Garrison Commander (Lt. Col. Paddy

Baines) and representatives of the Aldershot Branch of the Royal British Legion, veterans' associations, Rushmoor's Chief Inspector of Police, a representative of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service and representatives of community organisations.

The Mayor had also represented the Borough at a wreath laying ceremony at the Military Cemetery organized by Aldershot Garrison. Past Mayor, Cllr S.J. Masterson, had also represented the Borough at another Military wreath laying service at the Garden of Remembrance in front of the Royal Garrison Church of All Saints.

Wreaths had also been laid outside Devereux House War Memorial Home and the War Memorial outside Princes Hall.

The Farnborough Branch of the Royal British Legion had arranged for their Service of Remembrance at North Camp Methodist Church to be recorded in advance of Remembrance Sunday. The Mayor had felt honoured to be asked to record one of the readings. The Service had been made available online for viewing on Remembrance Sunday.

- (2) The Mayor advised Members that the West End Centre in Aldershot was inviting people to join in a community Christmas singalong on their doorsteps on Saturday, 19th December 2020. Everyone was encouraged to join in.

38. **STANDING ORDER 8 - QUESTIONS**

The Mayor reported that no questions had been submitted under Standing Order 8.

39. **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) **Children and Food Poverty**

It was **MOVED** by Cllr Gaynor Austin and **SECONDED** by Cllr Christine Guinness - That

“This Council thanks volunteers and organisations who stepped up over the half-term period to help feed children in the Borough.

This Council resolves to support these volunteers and organisations, if necessary, in order to ensure that all local children are fed, whether term-time or not. This Council recognises the COVID-19 pandemic has increased levels of food poverty and food insecurity within the Borough.

This Council believes:

- all Rushmoor residents should have access to sufficient safe, nutritious food;
- local councils can and must play a key role in tackling food poverty.

This Council therefore commits to:

- nominate a Cabinet Member to have specific responsibility for reducing food poverty and insecurity in Rushmoor;
- work to increase the take-up of Free School Meals;
- urge the Government to enshrine its existing commitment to UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 (eradicating hunger by 2030) in legislation;
- ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate the extent and causes of hunger in Rushmoor and make recommendations to tackle it;
- work with HCC and other partners to develop and implement a comprehensive and sustainable Food Access Plan which would look to eliminate food poverty in Rushmoor through the formalisation of an inclusive local Food Partnership.”

Speaking in support of her Motion, Cllr Gaynor Austin paid tribute to all the volunteers and businesses in Rushmoor who had been so quick to step forward and respond to Marcus Rashford’s call to feed children, normally in receipt of free school meals, over recent school holiday periods when no free school meals had been available. Cllr Austin was of the opinion that, in what was a comparatively affluent society, nobody should have to rely on vouchers or charity for food and that everyone should be able to access basic requirements for life, including safe and nutritious food.

Cllr Austin acknowledged that much work had been done in conjunction with other organisations and charities over the previous 6 – 12 months, but she felt that much of this had been scattergun in approach and that the Council did not yet know the whole extent of food poverty in the Borough. Cllr Austin wanted the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to take on this work and to make recommendations for a food action plan to eliminate food poverty in the Borough. Cllr Austin stressed that the issue was not just about food banks, it was about the people who did not have access to public funds, those who worked but were in work poverty and the long-term measures required to combat food poverty and how to monitor the effectiveness of such actions. Cllr Austin then called on Members to support the Motion.

In seconding the Motion, Cllr Christine Guinness referred to the pride she felt for the Rushmoor community who had joined together to make and deliver packed lunches to feed the Borough’s children in need during the recent school holiday period. Cllr Guinness stated that, according to the Trussell Trust, two million people had used food banks in 2019. She felt that food poverty was an on-going issue and that the Borough’s residents affected should know that there was support available.

During debate, Members referred to Marcus Rashford’s campaign for a food poverty task force, a petition for which had received over one million signatures supporting such action. Reference was also made to the Council’s Hardship Fund and the need to ensure that enough funding for this was budgeted for to support families in need during the on-going difficult times as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. During discussion, an Amendment was MOVED by Cllr A.R. Newell and SECONDED by Cllr K.H. Muschamp – That

“This Council acknowledges the role of Hampshire County Council, volunteers, supermarkets and local businesses in providing food packages for children during the half-term period.

Furthermore, this Council notes the steps being taken in the coming months to ensure that support can be provided to local residents in Rushmoor with the greatest need, including:

- the Supporting Communities Strategy and Action Plan to tackle deprivation and inequalities in Rushmoor;
- the progression of a plan to establish a Rushmoor Food Partnership to provide a community store;
- Hampshire County Council’s Food Voucher Scheme to support vulnerable children, young people and families during the Christmas holidays; and
- Hampshire County Council’s Discretionary Grant Fund for Schools to support families facing financial hardship.”

Cllr Newell referred to projects that were being put in place to work with partners to tackle the effects of poverty and deprivation under the priority areas of young people and resilience, mental and physical health, economic hardship and connecting communities and reducing isolation.

During debate on the Amendment, the view was expressed that the examination of food poverty issues needed to be extended to include heating, income, jobs and a whole range of other issues and how the Council needed to respond to people in need of help as a result of the effects of the pandemic and unemployment figures set to rise.

In seconding the Amendment, Cllr Muschamp referred to some of the funding proposals being proposed by Hampshire County Council to provide support to organisations to deliver services to those in need of help.

After further debate, the Amendment was put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 24; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAIN: 11 and the Amendment was declared **CARRIED**.

It was then MOVED by Cllr K. Dibble and SECONDED by Cllr A.H. Crawford that the Substantive Motion be amended by adding the following bullet points from the original Motion to the Substantive Motion:

“This Council therefore commits to:

- nominate a Cabinet Member to have specific responsibility for reducing food poverty and insecurity in Rushmoor;
- work to increase the take-up of Free School Meals;
- ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate the extent and causes of hunger at Rushmoor and make recommendations to tackle it;
- work with HCC and other partners to develop and implement a comprehensive and sustainable Food Access Plan which would look to

eliminate food poverty in Rushmoor through the formalisation of an inclusive local Food Partnership.”

The Amendment to the substantive motion was put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 9; AGAINST: 25; ABSTAIN: 1 and the Amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

The Substantive Motion was put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 32; AGAINST:0; ABSTAIN: 1 and the Substantive Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED** where upon it was

RESOLVED: That this Council acknowledges the role of Hampshire County Council, volunteers, supermarkets and local businesses in providing food packages for children during the half-term period.

Furthermore, this Council notes the steps being taken in the coming months to ensure that support can be provided to local residents in Rushmoor with the greatest need, including:

- the Supporting Communities Strategy and Action Plan to tackle deprivation and inequalities in Rushmoor;
- the progression of a plan to establish a Rushmoor Food Partnership to provide a community store;
- Hampshire County Council’s Food Voucher Scheme to support vulnerable children, young people and families during the Christmas holidays; and
- Hampshire County Council’s Discretionary Grant Fund for Schools to support families facing financial hardship.”

(2) **Citizens Advice Rushmoor**

It was MOVED by Cllr C.J. Stewart and SECONDED by Cllr Veronica Graham-Green – That

“This Council congratulates Citizens Advice Rushmoor for eighty years of service and support to the residents of Aldershot and Farnborough since the establishment of the first Citizens Advice branch in Aldershot in 1940.

Additionally, this Council affirms its commitment to this long and close partnership with Citizens Advice Rushmoor, and puts on record its thanks for the advice, support and advocacy given and available to all residents including members of our armed forces in the Borough.”

Speaking in support of his Motion, Cllr Stewart stated that, through this Motion, he hoped the Council could acknowledge and pay thanks for the tremendous work of Citizens Advice Rushmoor, which was celebrating its 80th anniversary in 2020. Thanks was due for all the work Citizens Advice Rushmoor had done to support the residents of the Borough. The Council also needed to reaffirm its commitment to a continued, long and close partnership with this incredibly valuable local Service.

Cllr Stewart advised that the Citizens Advice service in Rushmoor had begun in the midst of World War II, in September 1940 in Aldershot – the Home of the British Army. There had been many changes since then, with the birth of Farnborough Citizens Advice in 1964, as well as the incorporation of the Heathlands Citizens Advice service in the early 2000s – set up initially as an outreach service – which was now providing advice and assistance to users of local mental health services and their carers. Cllr Stewart advised Members that the team at Rushmoor Citizens Advice comprised around 30 staff, as well as over 100 volunteers who had helped over 9000 people in 2019 with nearly 30,000 different problems, such as debt, housing, benefit and employment issues. These volunteers gave their time and expertise which could be valued in 2019-20 at £700,000.

Cllr Stewart advised Members of the truly remarkable value and impact of the work of Citizens Advice Rushmoor. In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic had necessitated significant changes to the way the Service worked, with a move away from drop-ins, face-to-face interviews and staff in the office to remote working, supported by digital and video technology. The speed and effectiveness of this change had ensured an incredible continuity of service and had demonstrated the significant capability of the team. In looking forward, Cllr Stewart was confident that the service would continue to focus on supporting, training and recruiting volunteers, learning lessons from the pandemic (being more flexible, increasing access, and helping more people), continuing to collaborate with its partners and working to reach the most vulnerable in the Borough's community in its commitment to putting clients' needs at the heart of everything it did.

In seconding the Motion, Cllr Veronica Graham-Green spoke about the origins of a citizens' advice service in the UK. In 1924, the Betterton Report on Public Assistance had recommended that advice centres should be set up to offer members of the public advice to help them with their problems. By the 1930s the National Council for Social Service had looked at how to meet the needs of the civilian population in war time and had concluded that Citizens Advice Bureaux should be established throughout the country, particularly in the large cities and industrial areas where social disorganisation could be acute. By 4th September 1939, the day after World War II had been declared, there were 200 bureaux situated in London and the larger cities and towns throughout the country. Advisers dealt with problems relating to the loss of ration books, homelessness and evacuation and also helped to locate missing relatives and prisoners of war. It was noted that debt quickly became a key issue as income reduced due to call-ups.

Members were advised that, by 1942, there were 1074 bureaux. After the War, Government funding had been cut which caused a 50% reduction in branches and this was not restored until 1960. The Rent Act of 1957 had caused a surge in cases and, by the mid-1960s, 25% of the 1.25 million cases had related to housing. In later years, key things such as Consumer Protection, the effects of major recessions and benefit changes would all contribute to the caseload. In 1973 the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux received a government development grant to extend its network. In 1999 the first online advice guide was launched to give people access online 24 hours a day and, in 2002, a government grant of £20 million enabled the roll-out of e-government services to Citizens Advice Bureaux service clients. There was a name change to Citizens Advice in 2003 and in 2012/13 there

were more than two million cases face-to-face or by phone and more than twelve million online.

Cllr Graham-Green paid tribute to the sterling work of the late Councillor Frank Rust who had been a Trustee on the Board of Rushmoor Citizens Advice. She wished Cllr Nadia Martin well as she had taken on the role of Trustee on the Board. Cllr Stewart was also a Trustee on the Board and had been a volunteer while a student. As part of her work with youth, Cllr Sue Carter was trying to encourage young people to volunteer.

During discussion, Members spoke in support of the work of Rushmoor Citizens Advice and re-affirmed the Council's commitment to the service. Congratulations were also extended to the organisation on its 80th anniversary.

The Motion was then put to the meeting. There voted FOR: 35; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAINED: 0 and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED unanimously**.

40. **QUESTIONS FOR THE CABINET**

The Mayor reported that two questions had been submitted by Cllr M.J. Roberts for response by Members of the Cabinet. The first question was about the economy and post-Covid recovery.

In response, the Leader of the Council (Cllr D.E. Clifford) paid tribute to the hard work being done by members of staff at the Council during the pandemic. In particular he mentioned the Finance team which had worked over the Easter Bank Holiday to pay over £14 million to over 1000 businesses in the Borough, which was in addition to the £23 million relief on business rates as well as furlough payments. He also paid tribute to the partnership work with Rushmoor Citizens Advice and Rushmoor Voluntary Services. Reference was also made to Government Ministers being regularly in touch with Rushmoor's Chief Executive and himself and that information was regularly being fed back to the Government and to Hampshire County Council on local issues during the pandemic.

The second question was for the Deputy Leader of the Council (Cllr K.H. Muschamp) and was in regard to the climate change emergency.

In response, Cllr Muschamp outlined a number of schemes the Council was progressing, including: a food waste scheme; linking new ways of working to climate change principles; developing energy management proposals for council-owned buildings; pursuing funding opportunities for green homes and energy reduction measures; solar schemes for households; joining an EV pilot scheme; working with the Council's biodiversity officer to encourage biodiversity schemes in the Borough. The Council was working on its Climate Change Plan and actions that could be delivered over the following twelve months.

41. **REPORTS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

RESOLVED: That the Reports of the following meetings be received:

Cabinet	29th September 2020
Cabinet	13th October 2020
Cabinet	10th November 2020
Licensing, Audit and General Purposes	28th September 2020
Development Management	14th October 2020
Development Management	11th November 2020

42. **REPORTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD**

RESOLVED: That the Reports of the meetings of the Policy and Project Advisory Board held on 7th October 2020 and the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd October 2020 be received.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.
