

BOROUGH OF RUSHMOOR

MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Farnborough on Thursday, 7th November, 2024 at 7.00 pm.

The Worshipful The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura (Chairman))
The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart (Vice-Chairman))

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr Bill O'Donovan
Cllr Ivan Whitmee
Cllr Thomas Day
Cllr Rhian Jones
Cllr C.W. Card
Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr Peace Essien Igodifo
Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr Halleh Koohestani
Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr M.D. Smith
Cllr P.G. Taylor
Cllr S. Trussler
Cllr Becky Williams

Cllr Abe Allen
Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr Steve Harden
Cllr Lisa Greenway
Cllr Leola Card
Cllr Julie Hall
Cllr Jules Crossley
Cllr Keith Dibble
Cllr A.H. Gani
Cllr Christine Guinness
Cllr G.B. Lyon
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr Dhan Sarki
Cllr Sarah Spall
Cllr M.J. Tennant
Cllr Jacqui Vosper
Cllr Gareth Williams

Honorary Alderman Terry Bridgeman
Honorary Alderman Tony Gardiner
Honorary Alderman John Marsh

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Sue Carter.

Before the meeting was opened, the Mayor's Chaplain, Coleen Kusi-Agyapong, led the meeting in prayers, which included a one minute silence for Honorary Alderman John Debenham.

19. **TRIBUTE TO HONORARY ALDERMAN JOHN DEBENHAM MBE**

The Mayor paid tribute to Honorary Alderman John Debenham MBE who sadly passed away on 29 September, 2024.

John had served as a Councillor for 28 years, having first been elected to Farnborough Urban District Council. He had been Mayor of Rushmoor when the new Council was formed in 1974. John served until 2002 representing Knellwood ward and was an active member of the Council, Cabinet and Chairman of numerous bodies and Committees during his time on the Council.

His loyal and distinguished service was recognised in 2002 when he was made an Honorary Alderman, this was further acknowledged when he was awarded an MBE for services to the community.

John would be long remembered for having left a lasting legacy through his contribution to community life in the Borough.

Cllrs Crawford, Masterson and Card also paid tribute to Alderman Debenham, all of whom recognised his dedication and desire to support the community and his encouragement of other to do the same. John had been well respected and would be greatly missed by all who knew him. A Service of Thanksgiving would be held the following day at St Marks Church, Farnborough and the Council's thoughts were with John's wife, family and friends at this difficult time.

20. **MINUTES**

It was **MOVED** by Cllr Keith Dibble; **SECONDED** by Cllr Sarah Spall and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Ordinary Meeting on 25th July, 2024 (copy having been circulated previously) and the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting on 15th August, 2024 (copy having been circulated previously) be taken as read, approved and signed as a correct record.

21. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(1) The Mayor reported that events she had attended since the previous meeting of the Council had included:

- The Bula Festival – 3rd August
- The 44th Commemoration of Defense Forces Day – 15th August
- Africa Day at the Carnival – 24th August
- Merchant Navy Flag Raising – 3rd September
- Rushmoor Community Lottery Anniversary event – 11th September
- Battle of Britain Service – 15th September
- Rushmoor Community in Bloom and Rushmoor Schools in Bloom Awards Evening – 16th September & 19th September
- Rushmoor Pride 2024 – 28th September
- Diwali in Rushmoor – 18th October
- Black History Month performance event at Princes Hall – 22nd October

(2) In addition, the Mayor had visited two of the Council's twin towns, Meudon in France during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and Oberursel in Germany to mark the 35th Anniversary of Rushmoor's twinning with Oberursel.

(3) The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor who attended the Step by Step charity 'Sleep Out' on 11th October, in her place whilst she was away in Germany. The event raised funds to support young people facing homelessness.

- (4) It was also reported that the Mayor would be hosting a Charity Fashion and Beauty Show on Friday 8th November. Tickets were available in advance or on the door and all were welcome to attend.

22. **STANDING ORDER 8 - QUESTIONS**

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

23. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

(1) **Winter Fuel Payments**

The Council were asked to consider a Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr Sue Carter under Standing Order 9 (1) on Winter Fuel Payments. The Motion was proposed by Cllr Peace Essien-Igodifo on behalf of Cllr Carter, who had been unable to attend the meeting.

“Noting:

- The Government’s decision to restrict Winter Fuel Payments to pensioners in receipt of benefits like Pension Credit.
- Criticism from AgeUK which says 2 million pensioners needing the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role the payments play in helping many older people in Rushmoor afford heating.
- The additional strain this will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit, for reasons including administrative barriers and perceived stigma.
- The short notice and lack of adequate compensatory measures.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the Chancellor urging review and asking Government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners not claiming Pension Credit are protected.
- Sign the ‘Save the Winter Fuel Payment’ petition being run by Age UK.
- Promote Pension Credit through council services and partnerships including a special meeting of the Senior Citizens Forum.
- Urgently review options for our Hardship Fund and council tax support to help those hardest hit.
- Explore keeping council buildings including the Council Offices and Princes Hall open for older people who may not have anywhere warm to go and maintaining a directory of local facilities where people can stay warm.”

Cllr Essien-Igodifo emphasised the high level of pressure and worries about keeping warm faced by many residents during the winter months. She asked Members to stand together in unity to defend older people and protect those in need from illnesses linked to colds and the cold weather and highlighted the impacts for the NHS and other support services.

In seconding the Motion, Cllr Lyon reserved his right to speak.

It was MOVED by Cllr C.W. Card and SECONDED by Cllr T.W. Mitchell – That the Motion be amended (*in italics*) as follows:

“Noting:

- *The Council notes the recent announcement by the Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to those in receipt of Pension Credits. Pensioners on lower and middle income will not receive the payments. Across England and Wales the number of people eligible for winter fuel payments will fall by 10 million to 1.5 million people.*
- *This Council believes the threshold has been set too low at £218.15 a week for a single person or £332.95 for a couple.*

Council resolves to:

- *Group Leaders within Rushmoor Council to sign a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the winter fuel payment policy to be suspended and reviewed to ensure that vulnerable pensioners are protected.*
- *Urgently commence a significant awareness campaign to maximise uptake of pension credits. This will include social media council noticeboards, targeted letters and local media.*
- Urgently review options for our Hardship Fund and council tax support to help those hardest hit.
- Explore keeping council buildings including the Council Offices and Princes Hall open for older people who may not have anywhere warm to go and maintaining a directory of local facilities where people can stay warm.”

Cllr Card believed that by suspending and reviewing the threshold levels for winter fuel payments it would provide more time to gather information and assess the impacts of the current restrictions.

In discussing the amendment, it was noted that the Government’s Household Support Fund had been extended to help those most in need with cost-of-living pressures during the colder months. The point was made that the take-up of Pension Credit needed to be improved, and that support was needed to help those not yet claiming Pension Credit but who were eligible to do so.

Following further discussion, the Amended Motion was put to the meeting. In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs A. Adeola, C.W. Card, Leola Card, P.J. Cullum, A.H. Gani, Steve Harden, Peace Essien-Igodifo, G.B. Lyon, S.J. Masterson, T.W. Mitchell, M.D. Smith, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (15) AGAINST: Cllrs Abe Allen, Gaynor Austin, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Halleh Koohestani, Nadia Martin, Bill O’Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Ivan Whitmee, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (21) ABSTAIN: The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart), The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura) (2) and the Amended Motion was **DECLARED LOST**.

It was then MOVED by Cllr Gaynor Austin and SECONDED by Cllr Abe Allen – That the Motion be amended as follows:

“This Council:

- Notes the Government’s decision to means test Winter Fuel Payments and Age UK’s estimate that around 2.5 million pensioners will struggle to pay energy bills this winter, some of whom will be Rushmoor residents,
- Welcomes the increase of up to £472 to state pensions coming in April 2025 (almost double inflation), but also recognises the need to support Rushmoor pensioners in need this winter,

Resolves to:

- i. Continue to use council communication channels and partnerships to promote Pension Credit, the Household Support Fund and Warm Homes Discount,
 - ii. Explore the possibility of becoming an approved SGN Partner and promote any projects which can help vulnerable residents,
 - iii. Investigate options to provide help to people to claim Pension Credit,
 - iv. Review options for council tax support and the Hardship Fund to help those most in need, whilst ensuring other vulnerable groups continue to be supported,
 - v. Maintain a directory of local ‘warm banks’ and explore the use of council-owned buildings for this purpose,
 - vi. Write to the Chancellor seeking government support to help protect any vulnerable pensioners not claiming Pension Credit.
- Commits to the portfolio holder updating members in due course.”

In proposing the amendment, Cllr Austin acknowledged that the Motion was an emotive subject and stressed the importance of supporting Rushmoor residents to ensure that they received the support they needed to heat homes and protect health. She commented that public funds were limited, and prioritisation was needed to ensure that those who were most in need were supported. Cllr Austin believed that the measures taken would help to ensure the sustainability of Winter Fuel Payments for the future and provided a practical solution to support those most in need.

In seconding the amendment, Cllr Allen emphasised the need to focus on the practical actions to be taken at a local level to support the most vulnerable residents, and to be inclusive to all people facing hardship in the community.

During discussion on the amendment, the point was made about the critical importance of publicity, community networks and support to ensure that all those who were eligible for pension credit received the help that they needed and were signposted to all the support that was available, including warm hubs. It was advised

that DWP could help with the completion of residents' applications for pension credits and benefits by phone, and Rushmoor Citizens Advice was also a hub for those seeking advice and support.

The view was also expressed that a staged approach to the Government's new policy could have enabled more time to help people to access the benefits they were entitled to, and concerns were raised about the strain on the NHS and negative impacts for peoples' health.

Following further discussion, the Amended Motion was put to the meeting. In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs Abe Allen, Gaynor Austin, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Halleh Koohestani, Nadia Martin, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Ivan Whitmee, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (21) AGAINST: Cllrs A. Adeola, C.W. Card, Leola Card, P.J. Cullum, A.H. Gani, Steve Harden, Peace Essien-Igodifo, G.B. Lyon, S.J. Masterson, T.W. Mitchell, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (14) ABSTAIN: The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart), The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura) (2) and the Amended Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

The Amended Motion became the Substantive Motion.

It was then MOVED by Cllr G.B. Lyon and SECONDED by Cllr C.W. Card – That the Substantive Motion be further amended to include an insertion asking that representations be made that 'the policy be suspended, and the restrictions reviewed'.

In proposing the amendment, Cllr Lyon emphasised the need to ensure older vulnerable residents were protected from additional hardship and in SECONDING the Motion, Cllr Card expressed the opinion that the Council should act further to challenge the Government's winter fuel policy in the interests of residents.

Following discussion, the amendment was put to the meeting. In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs A. Adeola, C.W. Card, Leola Card, P.J. Cullum, A.H. Gani, Steve Harden, Peace Essien-Igodifo, G.B. Lyon, S.J. Masterson, T.W. Mitchell, P.G. Taylor, M.J. Tennant, S. Trussler and Jacqui Vosper (14) AGAINST: Cllrs Abe Allen, Gaynor Austin, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Rhian Jones, Halleh Koohestani, Nadia Martin, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, Ivan Whitmee, Becky Williams and Gareth Williams (21) ABSTAIN: The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) and The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura) (2) and the Amended Motion was **DECLARED LOST**.

The Substantive Motion was put to the meeting. In a recorded vote, there voted FOR: Cllrs A. Adeola, Abe Allen, Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Leola Card, A.H. Crawford, Jules Crossley, P.J. Cullum, Thomas Day, Keith Dibble, A.H. Gani, C.P. Grattan, Lisa Greenway, Christine Guinness, Julie Hall, Steve Harden, Peace Essien-Igodifo, Rhian Jones, Halleh Koohestani, G.B. Lyon, Nadia Martin, S.J. Masterson, T.W. Mitchell, Bill O'Donovan, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts, Dhan Sarki, Sarah Spall, P.G. Taylor, M. J. Tennant, S. Trussler, Jacqui Vosper, Ivan Whitmee,

Becky Williams, Gareth Williams and The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Calum Stewart) (36) ABSTAIN: The Mayor (Cllr Mara Makunura) and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

(2) **Sustainability**

The Council were asked to consider a Notice of Motion submitted by Cllr Jules Crossley under Standing Order 9 (1) on Sustainability.

“Recognising the urgent nature of the challenges confronting Rushmoor in terms of the climate crisis, the financial situation, the economic environment, and the inequity that some of our residents continue to face.

Further recognising how challenging it will be to achieve the targets that Council set after declaring a climate emergency in 2019.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Support and deliver sustainability across Council’s policies, projects, operations, and estate, where sustainability includes, but is not limited to, sound financial management, fair and equitable treatment of residents, staff, and organisations within Rushmoor, and have a positive impact on our environment and biodiversity.
- Introduce climate impact assessments for Council Decisions on all new projects.
- Encourage residents, businesses and organisations working within the borough to be responsible and sustainable.
- Be open and transparent in communications with residents and those working or operating in the borough.
- Foster relationships of mutual respect and collaboration with other councils, public authorities, and businesses to ensure sustainability.”

In proposing the Motion Cllr Crossley stated that the Motion had been put before the Council to help galvanise Members support and enhance visibility and success for embedding sustainability into the Council’s activities going forward. She stated that small measures that were taken locally helped to make an impact on global issues and contributed to the achievement of the Council’s ambitions. In **SECONDING** the Motion, Cllr Crawford emphasised the importance of working in partnerships, and engaging with residents and partners to create a sustainable future.

During discussion, there was agreement that embedding sustainability in the Council’s activities would have a positive environmental impact and help to reduce carbon footprint.

Following further discussion, the Motion was put to the meeting. There voted **FOR: 37 AGAINST: 0 ABSTAIN: 0** and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

24. QUESTIONS FOR THE CABINET

- (1) Cllr Steve Harden had submitted a question for response by the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services (Cllr Becky Williams) requesting clarity, as a ward councillor, on the process for supporting residents at risk of homelessness.

In response, Cllr Williams advised that data was collected in accordance with requirements and not all personal data may be held on all residents seeking support. Cllr Williams offered to follow up with Cllr Harden following the meeting.

- (2) Cllr Martin Tennant had submitted a question for response by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Property (Cllr Christine Guinness) requesting an update on when the Council would be submitting a planning application for a leisure centre in Farnborough.

In response, Cllr Guinness advised that due to the current financial position, any facility that was provided needed to be affordable - and a scheme was currently being considered. Timescales would be shared with all Members when appropriate, but it was thought that detailed plans would be available within 10 months.

- (3) Cllr Stuart Trussler had submitted a question for response by the Leader of the Council (Cllr Gareth Williams) regarding the impact of the increases to National Insurance Contributions on the Council's payroll when the new regime came into force from April 2025.

In response, Cllr Williams confirmed that no impact would be made on the Council's payroll as local authorities would be compensated. However, there was currently no method to assess any impacts from contracts.

- (4) Cllr Gareth Lyon had submitted a question for response by the Portfolio Holder for Development and Economic Growth (Cllr Keith Dibble) on how the Council were using the £50,000 from the Esso Pipeline project and the £70,000 from the Environment agency associated with Cove Brook.

In response, Cllr Dibble advised that there were three separate funding streams relating to the Cove Brook, Esso Environmental Investment Programme (£23,000), Environmental Agency Water Framework Directive (£90,000 (match funded)) and Environment Agency Collaborative Agreement funding (£70,000).

The funding would be used to improve wildflower corridors, in-stream habitat, and provide technical support for watercourse activities. Restore the ecological function of Cove Brook to achieve Good Ecological Status through the removal of artificial bed/banks, bankside vegetation management, and flow management in Southwood Country Park.

Each funding stream would target specific ecological enhancements, with ongoing coordination and flexibility in project design.

- (5) Cllr Paul Taylor had submitted a question for response by the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services (Cllr Becky Williams) regarding any conversations that had taken place with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) relating to progress for a Police Community Base in Farnborough Town Centre.

In response, Cllr Williams advised that a date was being sought for a meeting with the PCC to discuss this matter. It was important to understand how the facility would operate and the Leader would be included in any discussions.

Further questions for the Cabinet had been submitted prior to the meeting. However, as the 15-minute threshold for questions had been reached, these would be answered outside the meeting and responses shared with Members.

25. **REPORTS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

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

Cabinet	23rd July, 2024
Cabinet	6th August, 2024
Cabinet	10th September, 2024
Cabinet	15th October, 2024
Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards	31st July, 2024
Development Management	14th August, 2024
Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards	25th September, 2024
Development Management	23rd October, 2024

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

RESOLVED: that the Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 1st August, 12th September and 19th September 2024 and the Policy and Project Advisory Board meetings held on 23rd July and 24th September 2024 be noted.

The meeting closed at 10.12 pm.
