

BOROUGH OF RUSHMOOR

MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Farnborough on Thursday, 3rd October, 2019 at 7.00 pm.

The Worshipful The Mayor (Cllr Sue Carter (Chairman))

Cllr Gaynor Austin	Cllr Mrs. D.B. Bedford
Cllr T.D. Bridgeman	Cllr J.B. Canty
Cllr Sophia Choudhary	Cllr A.K. Chowdhury
Cllr D.E. Clifford	Cllr A.H. Crawford
Cllr P.I.C. Crerar	Cllr P.J. Cullum
Cllr K. Dibble	Cllr C.P. Grattan
Cllr Christine Guinness	Cllr A.J. Halstead
Cllr L. Jeffers	Cllr Prabesh KC
Cllr J.H. Marsh	Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr S.J. Masterson	Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr A.R. Newell	Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr M.J. Roberts	Cllr M.L. Sheehan
Cllr M.D. Smith	Cllr C.J. Stewart
Cllr P.G. Taylor	Cllr B.A. Thomas
Cllr Jacqui Vosper	Cllr J.E. Woolley

Honorary Alderman R.J. Kimber

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of The Deputy Mayor (Cllr P.F. Rust), Cllr M.S. Choudhary, Cllr R.M. Cooper, Cllr Veronica Graham-Green, Cllr Mara Makunura, Cllr Marina Munro, Cllr K.H. Muschamp and Cllr M.J. Tennant.

Before the meeting was opened, the Mayor's Chaplain, Revd. Steve Stewart, led the meeting in prayers.

22. **MINUTES**

It was MOVED by Cllr M.L. Sheehan; SECONDED by Cllr. P.G. Taylor and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 25th July, 2019 (copy having been circulated previously) be taken as read, approved and signed as a correct record.

23. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (1) The Mayor welcomed Cllr Thomas Mitchell to his first Council meeting following the recent St. Mark's Ward by-election.
- (2) The Mayor reported that Merchant Navy Day had been marked at the Council Offices on 3rd September, 2019 with a short service led by the Mayor's Chaplain, followed by the hoisting of the Red Ensign. The event had also been

attended by representatives of the Merchant Navy, Sea Cadets, Royal British Legion and Councillors.

- (3) The Mayor announced that her Charity Committee was organising a Charity Race Night to be held at the Council Offices on 25th October, 2019. All were welcome to attend.
- (4) The Mayor reported that her Charity Golf Day had had to be postponed and that it would now be held on Friday, 3rd April, 2020 at the Army Golf Club.
- (5) The Mayor advised Members that she had attended the presentation of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to Parity for Disability by the Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire on 16th September, 2019. She had been pleased to see the charity's dedicated volunteers being recognised for their work in supporting the services for people with multiple disabilities.
- (6) The Mayor reported that she had had the privilege and pleasure to be part of the official civic party from Rushmoor to visit Rzsezow to sign the memorandum of understanding between Rzsezow and Rushmoor to build links, forging new partnerships and bringing the areas' two communities together. She advised that both cities had close connections with the aerospace industries and the new link would provide opportunities for mutual exchange of information that would benefit both communities. She felt that fostering trade links was going to be very important.

24. RUSHMOOR COMMUNITY AWARD 2019

The Mayor reported that the Rushmoor Community Award recognised local people who had in some way made a significant contribution to the community. In exceptional circumstances for 2019, the Council had agreed to present the Award to two people – Stella Olivier and Suzanne Skippage – in recognition of their significant volunteering activities over many years.

Stella Olivier had been a stalwart to the Farnborough Community Centre for over 20 years. In recognition of her voluntary effort and hard work for the Community Centre, Stella had been nominated to receive the Community Award for 2019. In nominating Stella for the Award, the nominator had said that she had helped just about everybody on matters related to clubs and groups who had used Farnborough Community Centre and was the reason that the Centre had operated for so long with just a team of volunteers. She had also spent a number of years running a lunch club that met at the Centre. Stella was a former councillor and was well-known in the community, including councillors and officers at Rushmoor. Stella had given an incredible amount of time to the community over a period of 20 years or more and was an absolute community champion and stalwart.

Suzanne Skippage had served the community for the past 20 years. The Mayor advised that she had been told that Sue had a lively personality – laughed easily and was always upbeat and positive. She was active and energetic and belied her age. Before retirement, Sue had been a teacher who specialised in the educational support of families with autistic children. Sue had mentored a teenage mother at

The Source Young People's Charity; was a member of the Aldershot Town Centre Pastoral Team; volunteered for the Mustard Seed Autism Trust based at Frimhurst Family House; and, was a member of the Fit Lives Team that provided community support at Farnborough Leisure Centre to both the staff and users. It was also noted that, through St. Peter's Church in Farnborough, Sue supported a family with a severely disabled young girl; was on the team that provided a fortnightly lunch club for older people; was on the team that provided 'Holiday at Home' – a termly day event of food and entertainment for those who were too infirm to go away on holiday and Sue was also a Deputy Churchwarden and had been authorised as a Pastoral Assistant by the Guildford Diocese.

The Mayor stated that Stella and Sue had given an incredible amount of time to the community over the past 20 years or more and were both very worthy recipients of the Rushmoor Community Award 2019.

The Mayor then called them forward to receive their Award and certificate.

25. STANDING ORDER 8 - QUESTIONS

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

Cllr. Newell asked the Leader of the Council a question regarding what reassurances could be offered to residents that the Council was working hard to ensure mitigation for the proposed Esso Southampton to London Pipeline Project that passed through Queen Elizabeth Park and play area in Farnborough.

In response, Cllr. D.E. Clifford stated that the proposed project would be dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate and that the Council was a consultee only and not responsible for making any decision on the Pipeline Project. The Council had voiced concerns about the pipeline which went through both Queen Elizabeth Park and Southwood Country Park in Farnborough. The Council's barristers had met with Esso to see if an agreement could be reached. The Planning Inspectorate would be holding an Enquiry starting on 9th October 2019 through to February 2020 on aspects of the Pipeline Project where agreement had not been reached. The Council did not agree that the mitigation being taken by Esso was adequate and that the Council would continue to pursue this until an agreement was reached. Cllr. Clifford reassured Members and residents that the Council was in negotiation with Esso through barristers to get better mitigation for work to be done on the pipeline in 2021. Cllr. Clifford encouraged Members and residents to view the press release on this subject on the Council's website and to follow the link in the document to make their feelings known about the issues involved in the Pipeline Project.

26. NOTICE OF MOTION - DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES

The Council was asked to consider the following Notice of Motion on debt collection practices which had been submitted by Cllr. A.H. Crawford in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 9 (1):

“That this Council engage with the Stop the Knock campaign of the Money Advice Trust to improve its debt collection practices using the six steps to:

- (1) Make a clear public commitment to reduce the Council’s use of bailiffs over time
- (2) Review the Council’s signposting to free debt advice, including phone/online channels.
- (3) Adopt the Standard Financial Statement to assess affordability.
- (4) Have a formal policy covering residents in vulnerable circumstances.
- (5) Exempt Council Tax Support recipients from bailiff action.
- (6) Sign the Council Tax Protocol and review current practice against the ‘Supportive Council Tax Recovery’ Toolkit.”

In introducing the Motion, Cllr Crawford stated that the Motion had been inspired by the latest report from the ‘Stop the Knock’ campaign that the Money Advice Trust had launched the previous month to improve local government debt-collection practices.

As a member of the Welfare Reform Group, Cllr Crawford considered he was aware of the care that the Council took to assist the vulnerable in meeting the minimum Council Tax contribution of 12% from those who qualified for Council Tax Support, including providing help from the Hardship Fund, where it was considered necessary. However, the Trust report showed that, since the last report covering 2016/17, the Council’s use of bailiffs had increased by 11%. Using the Money Advice Trust data, Cllr Crawford had tracked back over the previous five years and found that the Council’s use of bailiffs had increased by 120% since 2014/15. It had more than doubled from 882 referrals in 2014/15 to 1,928 in 2018/19.

Cllr Crawford also pointed out that, when he had examined the Money Advice Trust data, bailiff referrals for Council Tax had gone down from 702 in 2016/17 to 247 in 2018/19. However, Cllr Crawford stated that bailiff referrals for parking had more than doubled from 817 in 2014/15 to 1,657 in 2018/19. He felt that the Council dealt with parking debts quite differently from other debts and that difference might be the source of the Council more than doubling its use of bailiffs over the previous five years. He was of the opinion that it looked harsh – when a Penalty Charge Notice of £25, if paid within two weeks, could end up costing several hundred pounds when enforced by bailiffs. Cllr Crawford referred to the inquest held the previous year of a debt-ridden young man, Jerome Rogers, who had taken his own life shortly after bailiffs had clamped the motorcycle that was essential to his work as a courier, in pursuit of two £65 parking fines imposed by his local council.

Cllr Crawford advised that the Money Advice Trust report set out another five steps, some of which the Council had already taken. The Trust had stated that it hoped to work with local authorities in order to achieve all six steps, which were set out in the Motion.

In seconding the Motion, Cllr Christine Guinness stated that the Council signing up to review its practices would be a good start. She was of the opinion that the Council should do more to find out if the recipients of Council correspondence had any issues reading and understanding what was being sent to them. One solution could

be to make a home visit to explain ways in which the Council might be able to help. Cllr Guinness advised Members that 64 local authorities had signed up to the campaign and called on the Council to support the Motion to demonstrate that the Council cared.

During discussion, views were expressed regarding the steps already taken by the Council to recognise the special circumstances of vulnerable people and that several steps were taken before the use of bailiffs. Attention was also drawn to the Council's protocol to be followed in order to help residents avoid the use of bailiffs. The view was also made that the Council's debt collection practices were adequate and that these were kept constantly under review. It was also suggested that debt collection practices could be something that could be examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Reference was also made to the effect on the poor, desperate and vulnerable of the use of bailiffs for relatively small debts and the need for a more sensitive approach to be taken.

On a recorded vote, there voted: FOR: Cllrs Gaynor Austin, T.D. Bridgeman, A. Chowdhury, A.H. Crawford, K. Dibble, C.P. Grattan, Christine Guinness, A.J. Halstead, Nadia Martin, T.W. Mitchell, Sophie Porter, M.J. Roberts (12); AGAINST: Cllrs Diane Bedford, J.B. Canty, Sophia Choudhary, D.E. Clifford, P.I.C. Crerar, P.J. Cullum, L. Jeffers, Prabesh KC, J.H. Marsh, S.J. Masterson, A.R. Newell, M.L. Sheehan, M.D. Smith, P.G. Taylor, B.A. Thomas, Jacqui Vosper, J.E. Woolley (17); and ABSTAINED: The Mayor (Cllr Sue Carter) and Cllr C.J. Stewart (2) and the Motion was **DECLARED LOST**.

27. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION BY THE COUNCIL**

Asset Management

The Leader of the Council (Cllr D.E. Clifford) introduced the Report of the Cabinet meeting held on 23rd July 2019 which recommended the approval of the Asset Management Plan. It was **MOVED** by Cllr D.E. Clifford and **SECONDED** by Cllr M.L. Sheehan – That approval be given to the Council's Asset Management Plan.

There voted FOR: 26; AGAINST: 0 and the Recommendation was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

28. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That, taking into account the public interest test, the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the under mentioned item to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 indicated against such item:

Report Para No.	Schedule 12A Para. No.	Category
29	3	Information relating to financial or business affairs

**THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS CONSIDERED
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

29. RUSHMOOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP - APPROVAL OF PARSONS BARRACKS CAR PARK PROJECT PLAN

The Corporate Services Portfolio Holder (Cllr P.G. Taylor) introduced the Exempt Cabinet Report which set out the Rushmoor Development Partnership's Project Plan in relation of the redevelopment of Parsons Barracks Car Park for approval and the proposed end use, in line with the previously approved Partnership Agreement.

It was **MOVED** by Cllr P.G. Taylor and **SECONDED** by Cllr A.R. Newell – That approval be given to the Rushmoor Development Partnership's Project Plan for the redevelopment of Parsons Barracks Car Park and end use.

There voted **FOR: 27; AGAINST: 0** and the Recommendation was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

**THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE CONSIDERED
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

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 M.L. Sheehan and

RESOLVED: That the Reports of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 23rd July and 20th August, 2019 be received.

(2) Cabinet

It was **MOVED** by Cllr M.L. Sheehan and **SECONDED** by Cllr A.R. Newell and

RESOLVED: That the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th September, 2019 be received.

(3) Development Management Committee

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

RESOLVED: That the Report of the meeting of the Development Management Committee held on 17th July, 2019 be received.

(4) Licensing, Audit and General Purposes Committee

It was MOVED by Cllr J.E. Woolley; SECONDED by Cllr. S.J. Masterson and

RESOLVED: That the Report of the meeting of the Licensing, Audit and General Purposes Committee held on 29th July, 2019 be received.

(5) Development Management Committee

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

RESOLVED: That the Reports of the meetings of the Development Management Committee held on 14th August and 18th September, 2019 be received.

32. REPORTS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

RESOLVED: That the Reports of the undermentioned meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Policy and Project Advisory Board be received:

Meeting	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	18th July, 2019
Policy and Project Advisory Board	31st July, 2019
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11th September, 2019

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.
