

BOROUGH OF RUSHMOOR

MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held remotely on Thursday, 25th June, 2020 at 6.30 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 A.J. Halstead
Cllr Prabesh KC
Cllr J.H. Marsh
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr Marina Munro
Cllr A.R. Newell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr M.D. Smith
Cllr M.J. Tennant

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 L. Jeffers
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr K.H. Muschamp
Cllr Sophie Porter
Cllr M.L. Sheehan
Cllr C.J. Stewart
Cllr Jacqui Vosper

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr P.G. Taylor.

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

11. **MINUTES**

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 14th May, 2020 and the Annual Meeting of the Council on 26th May 2020 (copies having been circulated previously) be taken as read, approved and signed as a correct record.

12. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (1) The Mayor reported that he had visited Aldershot Town Centre on 16th June 2020 to support the essential businesses that had remained open throughout Covid-19 and the non-essential businesses that were re-opening at that time. He had been accompanied by officers from Environmental Health who provided businesses with public health posters and advice sheets and the Mayor had spoken with a number of businesses.

- (2) The Mayor advised that he had attended the Armed Forces Day flag raising ceremony at Princes Gardens on 22nd June 2020. The ceremony had been low-key due to the restrictions surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. The Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend George Newton, had led a short service that had also been attended by the Garrison Commander (Lt. Col. Paddy Baines MBE) and the Garrison Sergeant Major (WO1 William Biggar) and the Council's Military Champion (Cllr Jacqui Vosper). The flag would be flown until 27th June 2020, which was Armed Forces Day. The Mayor advised Members that there would be a series of online activities on the Council's website for people to join in and watch to mark Armed Forces Day.

13. STANDING ORDER 8 - QUESTIONS

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

14. NOTICE OF MOTION - BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Council was asked to consider a Motion which had been submitted by Cllr D.E. Clifford in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 9 (1). As an exception in the case of this item, the Mayor had agreed that Standing Order 9 (6) in relation to the limit on the number of words in the Motion would not not apply. The Motion stated that:

"Rushmoor Borough Council place on record our deep sadness and revulsion at the senseless killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, USA.

Whilst we recognise that every life matters we echo the cries for justice and the assertion that 'Black Lives Matter' given the unique historic and contemporary challenges faced by black communities.

We stand together unreservedly with black members of our communities to work hard for current and future generations, in particular those citizens within our borough, to eradicate racism in all its forms and to proactively educate our citizens so that our towns are inclusive and anti-racist, not just in name and policies but in action. This starts with an all-party review led by the Policy and Project Advisory Board, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic members of our community, of processes, policies and organisational attitudes regarding racism."

Speaking on his Motion, Cllr Clifford thanked Rev Malcolm Cummins for the words and spirit of the motion, which was one of love and reconciliation and not hate and division. Cllr Clifford stated that the Motion was a genuine and humble attempt to listen, learn and deliver better for all. He felt that, however historic and profound the Motion was, the solutions to racism would not come from the government, law enforcement or council motions alone. It would come from every individual in the community humbly and quietly reflecting on their own views and attitudes.

During discussion, reference was made to the recent Black Lives Matter rally in the Borough, at which Rev Newton, the Mayor's Chaplain, had spoken. The view was also expressed that the motion mentioned an all-party review of the Council's processes, policies and organisational attitudes, including Black, Asian and Minority

Ethnic (BAME) members of the community. It was felt that this was welcome and had to include all councillors reaching out to these residents, listening and learning from their lived experience – not simply deferring to ‘community leaders’ who already held positions of influence and had a platform for their views. If Members were to “proactively educate our citizens” as the motion stated, it was felt that they must first educate themselves and those around them by reading, listening, openly discussing and deconstructing what were deeply ingrained thoughts, views and habits. It must be acknowledged that racism did not only exist in the hearts and minds of ‘bad people’; because if this did not happen, the defensive walls built around people would never be broken down sufficiently for genuine change to happen.

The view was also expressed that the huge challenges currently faced - the climate emergency, the coronavirus pandemic, Brexit and the certain economic crisis to come - brought with them the potential threat of rising conflict within society. It was also felt that facing these issues also brought an opportunity to come together, to address racism, to develop a green economic recovery and a fairer, more inclusive society.

In putting the motion into action, it was felt that the Council should focus on the Borough’s local context and the actual lived experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people who lived in the Borough. It was also mentioned that the issues raised by the Motion should be addressed in the development of the Council’s People Strategy by considering how the diversity of the workforce could be improved, reviewing the Council’s existing equalities policies and enhancing the training that Members and staff received. It was also felt that the Borough’s faith and community groups were already making an impact on breaking down barriers between communities in Rushmoor. The Council needed to help community groups build on this good work, with the Council as an enabling force to deliver a stronger, united, diverse and integrated community in Rushmoor.

During discussion, it was **MOVED** by Cllr T.W. Mitchell, **SECONDED** by Cllr Gaynor Austin, that the motion be amended by deleting the words “Whilst we recognise that every life matters” from the beginning of the second paragraph of the motion. Following a debate, the amendment was put to the meeting. There voted **FOR: 2; AGAINST: 26; ABSTAINED: 5** and the amendment was **DECLARED LOST**.

In further debate on the original Motion, personal, moving and inspiring testimonies were given by Black and Asian members of the Council who had experienced racism in educational establishments as well as the workplace.

Cllr K. Dibble, who had seconded the Motion, stated that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic members of the community had unique and historic challenges. For example, a black person was twice as likely to die in Police custody and nine times more likely to be stopped and searched. A person who was Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, was also shown to be more likely to die from Covid-19. These statistics were not because of the colour of skin, but because of social inequalities of health, housing and employment. It was noted that only 1% of the UK’s top bosses were black. It was noted that, according to the Rowntree Trust, figures for child poverty were 11% white, 26% black and children from Bangladeshi families equated to 67% of the total number. Cllr Dibble stated that black lives needed to matter more than ever and be

treated equally as white lives. He believed that Rushmoor had a proud record of diversity and multiculturalism through Aldershot being the home of the British Army, welcoming friends from across the Commonwealth and other allies and also the sudden growth in numbers of Nepalese people within the Borough. Cllr Dibble called on Members to support the Motion as the Council had a duty to scrutinise why the BAME communities in the Borough disproportionately suffered from poor health, housing and employment and that it was now time for action.

After further debate, the Motion was put to the Meeting. There voted FOR: 36; AGAINST: 0 and the Motion was **DECLARED CARRIED unanimously**.

15. **CONSTITUTION REVIEW - STANDING ORDERS FOR THE REGULATION OF BUSINESS**

The Chairman of the Licensing, Audit and General Purposes Committee (Cllr S.J. Masterson) introduced the Committee's Report and reminded Members that, at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 14th May 2020, an updated Constitution had been approved. However, in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules, the Standing Orders for the Regulation of Business had stood adjourned to this meeting for consideration and adoption.

Cllr Masterson advised that, since the last Council meeting, the provisions in Standing Order 9, which related to the length of Notices of Motion, had been reconsidered by the Constitution Working Group. Further to this discussion, Cllr Masterson proposed an amendment to allow an increase in the number of words permitted for Motions – from 100 to 200 words. This meant that Standing Order 9, new paragraph 8, would be changed to read:

“No Motion, other than a motion which may be moved without notice under Standing Order 12, shall exceed 200 words in length including any document appended thereto.”

This change was intended to enable councillors to include greater clarifying context and explanation - particularly for more complex topics presented in Motions.

Cllr S.J. Masterson **MOVED** and Cllr Mara Makunura **SECONDED** – That the Council adopt the revised Standing Orders for the Regulation of Business, for inclusion in Part 4 of the Constitution, subject to the amendment of Standing Order 9(6) to allow Motions to be submitted of up to 200 words.

Following discussion, there voted FOR: 35; AGAINST: 0; ABSTAINED: 1 and the Recommendation was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

16. **RECOMMENDATION OF THE CABINET**

The Leader of the Council (Cllr D.E. Clifford) introduced the Report of the Cabinet Meeting held on 3rd March 2020, which recommended the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism. It was **MOVED** by Cllr D.E Clifford and **SECONDED** by Cllr T.D.

Bridgeman – That the Council adopt the IFRA Working Definition of Antisemitism as follows:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

The adoption of the definition would demonstrate the Council’s commitment to engaging with the experiences of Jewish communities and to the provision of support where necessary. The adoption of the definition was not designed to be legally binding but would provide a valuable tool to improve understanding and to make a clear statement that antisemitism would not be tolerated. The definition would also support the Council’s continuing work within its policy framework to combat other forms of racism and hate crimes. This was particularly important given the multicultural population profile within the Borough.

During discussion, the comment was made that, in adopting this definition, Rushmoor would be joining over 150 other local authorities, the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales and 30 other countries. Members were advised that there had been a growing number of antisemitic incidents each year since 2016. The view was expressed that the Council should also seek to embed parts of the Board of Deputies’ Manifesto for Local Government that had been published in 2018. It was suggested that the Council’s Education Improvement Task and Finish Group should explore the current level of provision in Rushmoor. The manifesto also called for councils to identify opportunities for civic events with the Jewish community and it was also suggested that the Council should build on its commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day each year in January.

There voted FOR: 35; AGAINST: 0 and the Recommendation was **DECLARED CARRIED**.

17. **QUESTIONS FOR THE CABINET**

The Mayor reported that two questions had been submitted for response by the Cabinet.

- (1) Cllr Nadia Martin asked a question of the Portfolio Holder for Operational Services (Cllr. M.L. Sheehan) about weekly bin collections.

In response, Cllr Sheehan stated that the fortnightly green bin collection had been introduced by Serco to maintain services as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Currently, the levels of absenteeism and also in light of fears regarding a second peak in the number of people catching the virus meant that the fortnightly collection would remain for the time being.

- (2) Cllr Nadia Martin asked a question of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economy (Cllr Marina Munro) regarding discussions with London and Cambridge about the opening of the toilets in the Wellington Centre.

In response, Cllr Munro stated that she would provide a written response to Cllr Martin.

18. **REPORTS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES**

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

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| Cabinet | 3rd March 2020 28th April 2020 2nd June 2020 |
| Development Management | 11th March, 2020 |
| Licensing, Audit and General Purposes | 23rd March, 2020 |
| Development Management | 27th May, 2020 |
| Licensing, Audit and General Purposes | 28th May, 2020 |

19. **REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

RESOLVED: That the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13th February, 2020 be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.
