

# MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL

7 FEBRUARY 2023

## PRESENT:

The Mayor (Councillor Ms Watson-Merret), Councillors Mrs Allanach, Mrs A'Barrow, Mrs Brown, Mrs Crane, Daly, Douglas, Miss Dumbleton, Eccleson, Edwards, Mrs Garcia, Gillias, Harrington, Mrs Hassell, Miss Lawrence, Lawrence, Lewis, Ms Livesey, Lowe, Ms Maoudis, Moran, Mrs New, Mrs O'Rourke, Mrs Parker, Picker, Poole, Rabin, Ms Robbins, Mrs Roberts, Roberts, Roodhouse, Mrs Roodhouse, Sandison, Slinger, Srivastava, Mrs Timms, Ward and Willis.

## 64. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Ellis, Mahoney, Mistry and Dr Williams.

## 65. MINUTES

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 14 December 2022 were approved and signed by the Mayor.

## 66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

Councillors Mrs O'Rourke and Ward left the meeting during item 1(a) of Part 2 of the agenda by virtue of being named in the report.

## 67. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The Mayor had been deeply concerned to hear of the two devastating earthquakes that struck south-eastern Turkey near the border with Syria on Monday. Thousands of people had died and many were injured.

Freezing temperatures had left thousands exposed to extreme cold and now many were without shelter. Hundreds of people remained trapped under rubble, needing urgent support. The impact had been devastating in areas that already hosted a high number of displaced and vulnerable families who needed urgent humanitarian assistance.

Details of aid agencies that had opened public appeals were available on the Disasters Emergency Committee website. If the Disasters Emergency Committee launched its own appeal, the Council would share details with its residents.

Everyone present at the meeting stood in a moment's silence to reflect on the plight of everyone affected by this disaster.

(b) The Mayor had been delighted to attend the Rugby Ukrainian Group's Christmas Eve celebrations last month at Paddox Methodist Church. Mothers and children, together with family hosts and volunteers, enjoyed an evening of traditional food and entertainment. She was also very touched to be gifted a blouse from the Kherson region of Ukraine from the group.

(c) It had been a privilege for the Mayor to attend the closing event for the New Cross Fire 1981 exhibition at the Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, which saw a community come together to reflect on the lives lost and share treasured memories of those who were so cruelly taken away.

The emotional event brought together family and friends - many of whom were from Rugby - who have lived with the memories of a tragedy which, 42 years on, remains a defining moment in British history. For so many survivors, family and friends, the emotional impact of the events of 42 years ago remains raw to this day, but all show dignity and a determination to keep the memories of loved ones alive and make sure our community grows stronger, together, moving forward.

The Mayor extended her congratulations to Lorna Tavares, Yvonne's cousin and the driving force behind the exhibition, and Robert Ruddock, the only surviving sibling of the fire, both of whom spoke at the event. It was a pleasure for the Mayor to hear their stories.

(d) The Mayor would be hosting a Charity Bingo Night in aid of her charity, Rugby Foodbank, on Friday 21 April at 7.00pm at Rugby Railway Club. The event is open to members of the public as well as all Members and officers. Tickets cost £12 each which includes entrance, bingo books and charity donation and these can be purchased from the Mayoral and Civic Officer in the Democratic Services team or from the Railway Club.

## **68. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10**

The following question was received in accordance with the Council's Constitution and had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting and published on the Council's website.

**Councillor Srivastava asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:**

“Latest figures for England show there were 120,710 dependent homeless children living in temporary accommodation in December, highlighting the urgent need to build to build more affordable homes. Can the Leader of the Council confirm how many children and dependants in Rugby are currently homeless and living in temporary accommodations?”

**Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, replied as follows:**

“Thank you for your question.

We currently have 84 households, including those comprising solely of single people, living in temporary accommodation in the borough. This includes 125 dependent children. There are no children living in Houses in Multiple Occupation.

However, it should be caveated that of the 84 households, we are still determining the status of 69 households, in respect of homelessness, and in accordance with the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

For families temporarily accommodated in Bed and Breakfast the longest stay is six weeks, as prescribed under the homelessness legislation. We ensure that families in B&B settings are prioritised for move on to alternative temporary accommodation before the 6 weeks deadline. We acknowledge that bed and breakfast accommodation is not ideal therefore we only use this when we have no other option. Instead, our preference is to accommodate families with dependent children in either self-contained private sector leased properties or council owned accommodation. The length of stay in such properties can vary according to the complexities of the individual case, the resulting housing needs and the supply of available properties to reasonably meet the housing needs. This can range from several weeks to several months.

We continue to apply a housing options approach to supporting these households and in doing so, it is often legitimate for us to enable an offer accommodation in the private rented sector to meet their needs longer term.”

**69. REPORT OF CABINET – 9 JANUARY 2023**

**RESOLVED THAT** – the report be confirmed and adopted.

**70. REPORT OF CABINET – 6 FEBRUARY 2023**

**RESOLVED THAT** – the report be confirmed and adopted.

**71. REPORTS OF OFFICERS**

**(a) Draft Housing Revenue Account Capital and Revenue Budgets 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27**

Council considered the report of the report of the Chief Officer for Communities and Homes and Chief Officer for Finance and Procurement (Part 1 - agenda item 7(a)) concerning the Council’s draft Housing Revenue Account Capital and Revenue Budgets for 2023/24 alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2023-27.

Further to debate, Councillor Roodhouse moved and Councillor Sandison seconded the following amendment:

- (1) The draft revenue budgets for 2023/24 and the updated medium term financial plan in Appendices A and C be approved inclusive of 7% increase in rent and service charges based on estimated costs;*
- (2) the approved capital budget in Appendix B be noted;*
- (3) the contribution to Climate Change reserve and Transformation reserve as set out in paragraph 3.6 and 3.7 be approved and the climate change reserve should include the fitting of either Photovoltaic or solar panels to Lesley Souter House, Tanser Court and Albert Square to reduce service charges; and*
- (4) Council requests that Rugby CAB and the Council's Independent Living Coordinators contact tenants to offer cost of living and benefit advice especially those that are paying the 258% increase in service charges at Lesley Souter House, Albert Square and Tanser Court.*

Councillor Picker then moved and Councillor Poole seconded the following friendly amendment to the original amendment:

- (1) The draft revenue budgets for 2023/24 and the updated medium term financial plan in Appendices A and C be approved inclusive of 7% increase in rent and service charges based on estimated costs;
- (2) the approved capital budget in Appendix B be noted;
- (3) the contribution to Climate Change reserve and Transformation reserve as set out in paragraph 3.6 and 3.7 be approved and the climate change reserve should include the fitting of either Photovoltaic or solar panels and in line with the provisions of the climate change strategy and the energy efficiency and retrofit strategy being prepared as part of that, plans will be set out regarding the fitting of solar panels to all council assets, where possible; and
- (4) Council requests that Rugby CAB and the Council's Independent Living Coordinators contact tenants to offer cost of living and benefit advice to all our tenants struggling with the rising cost of living.

Councillor Roodhouse and Councillor Sandison accepted the friendly amendment. The Mayor then put the friendly amendment to the vote and declared it carried. A vote was then taken on the substantive motion and the Mayor declared it carried.

**RESOLVED THAT –**

- (1) the draft revenue budgets for 2023/24 and the updated medium term financial plan in Appendices A and C be approved inclusive of 7% increase in rent and service charges based on estimated costs;
- (2) the approved capital budget in Appendix B be noted;
- (3) the contribution to Climate Change reserve and Transformation reserve as set out in paragraph 3.6 and 3.7 be approved and the climate change reserve should include the fitting of either Photovoltaic or solar panels and in line with the provisions of the climate change strategy and the energy efficiency and retrofit strategy being prepared as part of that, plans will be set out regarding the fitting of solar panels to all council assets, where possible; and
- (4) Council requests that Rugby CAB and the Council's Independent Living Coordinators contact tenants to offer cost of living and benefit advice to all our tenants struggling with the rising cost of living.

**72. NOTICES OF MOTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 11**

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, there were no motions on notice to be considered.

**73. CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

**74. COMMON SEAL**

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by the Deputy Mayor and

**RESOLVED THAT** - the Common Seal be affixed to the various orders, deeds and documents to be made or entered into for carrying into effect the several decisions, matters and things approved by the Council and more particularly set out in the reports adopted at this meeting.

**75. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC UNDER SECTION 100(A)(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**RESOLVED THAT** - under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of information defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**76. PRIVATE REPORT OF CABINET – 6 FEBRUARY 2023**

Council considered the private report of Cabinet dated 6 February 2023 together with a supplementary report which had been circulated to all members.

**RESOLVED THAT** – the report be confirmed and adopted.

**MAYOR**