MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL
THURSDAY, 7 JULY 2022

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford
and live streamed on Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors T Combellack (Chairman), D Mason (Vice-Chairman), R Adair, S Bailey, M Barney, K Beardsall, N Begum, A Brennan, B Buschman, R Butler, N Clarke, J Cottee, G Dickman, A Edyvean, M Gaunt, P Gowland, B Gray, L Healy, L Howitt, R Inglis, Mrs C Jeffreys, R Jones, R Mallender, S Mallender, G Moore, J Murray, A Phillips, V Price, F Purdue-Horan, S J Robinson, K Shaw, D Simms, C Thomas, R Upton, D Virdi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, G Wheeler and J Wheeler

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
G Pearce	Solicitor
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager
S Whittaker	Service Manager - Finance

APOLOGIES:

Councillors B Bansal, J Stockwood, Mrs M Stockwood and G Williams

14 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Purdue-Horan declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 10 Bingham Improvement Board report and would not take part in the debate.

Councillor Combellack declared an interest in Item 11 Motion A and would not take part in the debate.

15 **Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 May 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 26 May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

16 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor reported that her Civic year had certainly got off to a flying start,

welcoming the Nottingham Forest Football team back to the Borough following their historic win at Wembley. The event at the Council House in the city centre was very exciting, with her holding up the trophy to the 40,000 fans gathered in the Market Square, and enjoying the red and white smoke, collective sing-along, and tickertape parade.

The Jubilee celebrations later the same week had been just as exciting, with the Mayor attending a number of wonderful street parties, beacon lightings, church services and judging a number of Jubilee themed competition including dogs in fancy dress! Since then, the magnificent Proms in the Park event to celebrate Armed Forces Day had been topped with a stunning performance from a Queen tribute band.

The Mayor referred to a number of civic services for other district councils that she had attended, including lunch at the Bishop's Palace, a Jubilee service at Southwell Minster, the beating of the retreat at the DMRC, and the annual pilgrimage to Crich, which had been spectacular, with a glorious Lancaster Bomber flypast.

17 **Leader's Announcements**

The Leader referred to the upcoming move of Anthony May, currently Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council, to his new post at the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and stated that Mr May had provided the county with excellent leadership throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and working towards devolution for the East Midlands. The Leader also welcomed Nora Senior, a Rushcliffe resident, to her new post as Chairman of the Freeport, and wished her well in this important role.

The Leader went on to update Council about two significant projects. Firstly, the Borough's support of families displaced by the war in Ukraine. The Borough had put forward 126 sponsor families to date and 134 individuals had already been placed in sponsor homes, with a further 184 individuals going through the resettlement process. The Leader thanked sponsor families, Council officers and charity workers who had put so much effort into creating safe spaces for displaced Ukrainian families.

Finally, the Leader reported that the Council had paid out 100% of the energy rebates funded by the Government to help residents with the cost-of-living crisis to 36,770 properties in the Borough. This has been achieved well in advance of the September deadline set by the Government. The Leader thanked the Council's Finance team for their excellent efforts supporting residents during such difficult times.

18 **Chief Executive's Announcements**

The Chief Executive reminded Council about the two events organised for prospective candidates thinking of standing in next year's Borough and Town and Parish Council elections. The first would be held on Thursday, 14 July, at 6pm at the Arena and then on Wednesday, 20 July, at 5pm via Teams. The events would focus upon what was involved in standing for election and answer any questions from prospective candidates.

The Chief Executive went on to thank those who had already been involved by providing quotes for the Guide or films for the social media campaigns and she invited members of the Council to come along to the events and informally share their experiences with potential candidates.

19 **Citizens' Questions**

No citizens' questions were received for this meeting.

20 **Revisions to the Council's Constitution**

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson, presented the report of the Monitoring Officer, outlining proposed revisions to the Council's Constitution.

In presenting the item, the Leader proposed that following the meeting of Governance Scrutiny Group, two additional changes had been recommended, which he asked the Monitoring Officer to make:

- Part 2 Committee Structure – to include an additional bullet point for the Governance Scrutiny Group to cover the Review of the Council as a "Going Concern."
- Part 3 A process for the remuneration of the Chief Executive to clarify that the pay scale is set by Council, it is movement along the scale that is determined by the Leader, Deputy Leader and Leader of the Opposition, who are advised by an agreed external professional and the Strategic Human Resources Manager.

The Leader advised that it had further been requested that the reference to the Director of Development and Economic Growth be removed from the changes proposed on pages 32 and 92, and that this was agreed.

The Leader explained that this was an administrative item proposing constitutional changes to procedures relating to the paid structures for the Chief Executive, GDPR, and to Planning Committee and referred to the summarised changes, details of which were set out in Appendix One of the report. The Leader confirmed that this item had been considered and approved by the Governance Scrutiny Group at its meeting on 30 June 2022.

Councillor Edyvean seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Gowland advised that the Labour Group was generally in support of the report, apart from the changes to Planning Committee, as by moving Planning Committee to the afternoon, the Council would be effectively excluding a wide number of people in the population from becoming Councillors, because that if they worked, they could not become a Councillor and attend Planning Committee.

Councillor Jones welcomed the majority of the changes, and particularly the removal of the reference to the Director Development and Economic Growth

referred to above. However, Councillor Jones stated that he was also concerned about moving Planning Committee to the afternoon and including that in the Constitution. The Council wanted a variety of candidates to come forward to stand for election, and young people in work would find afternoon meetings difficult to attend. Councillor Jones understood that it was beneficial to developers and officers but said that it had an impact on the availability of Councillors.

Councillor R Mallender thanked officers for their work on this report and was pleased to see the updates and amendments coming through from Standards Committee. Councillor Mallender shared the concerns expressed by other Councillors regarding the start time of Planning Committee meetings and questioned why this was being included in the Constitution and stated that it should be a matter that was dealt with by the Planning Committee itself. Councillor Mallender felt that writing it into the Constitution would fetter the discretion of the Chair and members of that Committee as to how they might best serve their community.

Councillor Thomas also welcomed the removal of the reference to the Director of Development and Economic Growth; however, she could not support permanently moving Planning Committee to the afternoon. Councillor Thomas stated that this reduced democratic representation, making it more difficult for Councillors and members of the public who worked during the day to be involved, and left smaller groups within the Council more disproportionately affected.

Councillor Edyvean advised that many people either worked in the evenings, or had commitments, including Councillors, and Council was reminded that whatever time a meeting was held, some parts of the population would be excluded.

Councillor R Mallender asked for clarification as to why it was necessary for the Planning Committee start time to be included in the Constitution.

Councillor Upton agreed that there was never going to be a perfect time to hold the meeting, that working patterns had changed dramatically and the nine to five working day had disappeared. Councillor Upton referred to evening meetings where members of the public had attended to hear their application debated, only to be told that the Committee had run out of time, and they would have to wait until the next meeting. Councillor Upton reminded Council that a six month pilot had taken place, with a significant consultation process, involving members of the public, applicants, developers, and Councillors, with the majority support being for Planning Committee to be held in the afternoon.

Councillor Butler agreed with Councillor Upton that sometimes when applications were very complex and detailed, there were occasions where the Committee would run out of time, which was not helpful to anyone, including members of the public attending the meeting. Councillor Butler referred to Councillor R Mallender's concerns about fettering the decisions of the Chair and stated that he did not understand why that would be the case. Councillor Butler added that Planning Committee was quasi-judicial, that it was important that procedures were followed, and that by 10pm at night there was danger of

losing attention to detail and members did not want to make mistakes on important decisions. Councillor Butler stated that it was unusual for other similar decision making bodies to have meetings starting after 7pm.

Councillor Gaunt acknowledged that the time had been changed as it was felt that the earlier start time worked better, although he himself could now not attend any meetings to represent his community, but echoed Councillor R Mallender's question as to why this was to be included in the Constitution.

Councillor Simms stated that as a working person he was confused as to why this was to be included as part of the Constitution and considered that the earlier start time worked for Councillors who were retired; however, he and many other working people would not be able to attend. Councillor Simms questioned why it was being mandated in the Constitution and advised that if meetings were too long, then it was for officers to plan the meetings so that they ran appropriately, in the same way that the courts planned their cases. Councillor Simms stated that he could not support the proposal and asked why the possibility of holding a daytime and an evening meeting on alternate months had not been considered.

The Leader advised that the report related to revisions to the Constitution and was not a debate about Planning Committee, given that there had previously been many hours of debate already on that subject, a six month pilot, feedback surveys completed, the process had been transparent, and approved by Council. The Leader explained that all meetings, including Full Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings were included in the Constitution and that this formed part of how a well-run Council governed itself. Council was advised that whilst those changes were being included in the Constitution, the Planning Committee Chairman could amend the time of the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the revisions to the Constitution be approved.

21 **Public Space Protection Order - Dog Control**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Safety, Councillor Inglis, presented the Report of the Director – Neighbourhoods, outlining the proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Dog Control in Rushcliffe.

Councillor Inglis explained that the process for this report had commenced in January 2021, when the Communities Scrutiny Group had considered that the current Council resources to undertake dog fouling issues were very limited. Two public consultations were undertaken, with parish councils and the public, both were overwhelmingly supporting of the proposal, with the details of those responses outlined in Appendix Three of the report. Approval from Cabinet had also been gained to take this forward in supplementing the dog fouling order, which was already in place. Councillor Inglis explained that current measures fell short for new building and residential areas and their open spaces, as they were not included. The Council had responsibility to ensure the safety of its residents and visitors for all of its open spaces and Councillor Inglis considered that this PSPO was the right tool to deliver that. Council was advised that this was a safeguarding tool, it would protect children, minimise risk, and effectively deal with irresponsible dog owners and dog walkers.

Councillor Inglis stressed that prosecution was not the aim of the PSPO, nor was income generation, rather it would be used to target areas and those who took no responsibility for their dogs. This Order would also help protect all open spaces where the public had access, and to play parks that were fenced or enclosed by exclusion, and having dogs on leads in signed areas, to ensure owners had the means to remove any excrement.

Councillor Inglis appreciated that the majority of dog owners were totally responsible; however, dogs could be unpredictable, as history had shown with unprovoked dog attacks, especially in parks and recreational areas. Councillor Inglis referred to the unpleasant smell and associated health and hygiene risks of dog poo, and the problem of dog poo bags being hung in trees. Council was reminded that conscientious owners would have nothing to fear nor have need to change their habits, and Councillor Inglis stated that this PSPO clearly set out the standard for everyone to understand and to follow in helping to keep Rushcliffe safe.

Councillor Inglis advised that the local Police Commander and the Police and Crime Commissioner were both supporting of the PSPO. The PSPO would allow for an extended investigation capacity, using contracted enforcement officers, currently Wise, on a cost neutral basis, to increase the Council's capacity in dealing with complaints. Council was reminded that the four Es, Engage, Explain and Encourage would be considered before an Enforcement was made and any action would be monitored by officers to ensure that it was proportionate and in the public interest.

In conclusion, Councillor Inglis stated that it was disappointing that despite extensive consultation, Tollerton Parish Council had continually requested that their open spaces be excluded from this order, which it had been, but the rest of Rushcliffe had been incorporated. The reasons for Tollerton's exclusion were outlined in Appendix Two of the report.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Dickman advised that as a conscientious dog owner, he had no concerns or issues regarding this PSPO, and stated that the Order was looking to influence all dog owners to take responsibility for their dogs. It was pleasing to note the overwhelming public support in the consultation and Councillor Dickman considered that the PSPO requirements were basic and in place for people who had no consideration of others.

Councillor Dickman stated that everyone wanted to enjoy their communities and the PSPO would help to alleviate the concerns of residents who were wary of dogs. It was important that this PSPO was not seen or reported as a means of fining people, but that its intention was to provide greater safety and enjoyment for all, and he considered that this PSPO would be a welcome and pre-emptive initiative.

Councillor J Walker stated that the Labour Group supported the recommendation and welcomed anything that made this issue more enforceable.

Councillor Price stated that the Liberal Democrat Group supported the

initiative. Dog fouling could render public spaces unsafe and unusable, and Councillor Price referred to an ongoing issue in a park in Musters' ward where the action of a small number of irresponsible dog owners was making the space unusable for local children. Councillor Price welcomed any additional powers that made enforcement more likely to be successful.

Councillor R Mallender stated that there was no such thing as the 'dog poo fairy' and considered this issue to be a problem for all Councillors to a greater or lesser extent. Within Lady Bay there was a wonderful open area, the Hook, and whilst most dog owners were very conscientious, many poo bags were still found in bushes and hanging in trees. Councillor Mallender advised that whilst he had not been a fan of PSPOs when they were first introduced, he thought that this was an excellent use and supported the recommendation.

Councillor Thomas stated that the Leake Independent Group supported this measure to deal with this issue, which was of such concern to many residents. The requirement to carry poo bags was much more enforceable and also gave opportunities for education. Councillor Thomas welcomed the fact that the public open space on new estates would now be subject to enforcement and hoped that a strong communication campaign would follow the adoption of the PSPO, and that it would be refined in the future to increase its scope.

Councillor Butler agreed that most dog owners were responsible, and it was a shame that the PSPO was required because of a relatively small minority of anti-social people. Councillor Butler questioned the habit of hanging poo bags in trees and hedges, particularly when this was often very close to a bin. Councillor Butler reiterated that it was a shame that this measure was required; however, if it got the message across to people who were anti-social with their dogs, then it was welcomed.

Councillor Simms stated that as a dog owner, it was irritating to see dog poo and referred to a measure adopted by Newton Parish Council, which had worked well in providing poo bag dispensers. Councillors Simms said that sometime people could run out of bags and suggested that providing bags would act as an incentive in addition to fining people.

Councillor S Mallender referred to the Council's policy of being plastic free and requested that if the Council did provide bags that they be biodegradable. Council was advised that unfortunately the smell of poo bags if left on the ground was attractive to deer and horses to eat, and as those animals were unable to be sick, eating the plastic could sometimes lead to their death. Councillor Mallender advised that leaving the dog poo on the ground was preferable to leaving it in a plastic bag on the ground or in a tree, as at least it would rot.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed PSPO for the control of dog related anti-social behaviour as set out in Appendix One be approved.

22 **Bingham Improvement Board Report**

Having declared an interest, Councillor Purdue-Horan left his seat but remained in the Council Chamber and did not part in the debate or vote for this

item.

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership, Councillor Robinson presented the report of the Chief Executive outlining the Bingham Improvement Board report.

The Leader recalled that at its meeting on 30 September 2021, Council had accepted a petition from The Bingham Deserves Better group, following several years of complaints regarding the running of Bingham Town Council. Legally the Council could not action the requests in that petition; however, it was recognised that there were significant concerns, and the Leader reminded Council that he had proposed a change to the officer's recommendations in the report, to establish this Improvement Board. The Leader was pleased that this recommendation had been fully supported, and following on from that decision, he, together with the Chief Executive, the Mayor and the clerk from Bingham Town Council had agreed the terms of reference for the Board, which had also been approved by Bingham Town Council. The Board, which was made up of three independent members, and two Bingham Town Councillors had completed its report, and that had been considered and agreed by Bingham Town Council at its meeting on 24 May 2022. The report had also been considered by Cabinet on 14 June 2022, before coming before Council this evening.

The Leader summarised the four main objectives of the Board, details of which were listed in the Board's report. Council was advised that the Board had spoken with over 25 different stakeholders, to canvass views, read numerous reports and attended Bingham Town Council meetings, and the Board was commended for the thorough and excellent work it had achieved.

The Leader stated that some of the findings in the report made for disappointing reading, in particular the lack of respect, poor behaviour and lack of openness, together with a disregard for the Code of Conduct. However, the Leader considered that there were two main issues of most concern: one being the lack of focus on delivering services for the community, in particular the car park, as all focus had been on internal issues; and secondly the significant and disgraceful financial costs incurred from this entire process, at a time when every Council was trying to save money.

In conclusion, Council was advised that moving forward, the report listed very clear and tangible recommendations, underpinned by the Nolan Principles, and the Leader referred to a statement in the report, which looked to future cooperation and the potential for change being in the hands of members, and supported that sentiment.

Councillor Edyvean seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor J Walker confirmed that the Labour Group would be supporting the recommendation and stated that it was good to see democracy returning to the residents of Bingham, along with decency and integrity in how politics was run.

Councillor Jones advised that the Liberal Democrat Group would be supporting

the recommendation and referred to the impact that this situation had had on residents and their perception of the Town Council, as was. Councillor Jones stated that the report was excellent, and the review in six months' time was welcomed; however, the only disappointing thing, was the lack of an apology to the Town Clerk, but it was hoped that things would move forward now.

Councillor R Mallender advised that the Green Group would be supporting the recommendation, and praised the excellent report, which would help the residents of Bingham, who expected and deserved better. It was noted that with the proposed new housing, Bingham would grow significantly, and it was important that those residents received the help and support they needed from the Town Council.

Councillor Thomas confirmed that the Leake Independent Group supported the recommendation.

Councillor Clarke fully endorsed the comments made by the Leader in respect of the car park, which was a major project, and it was vital that this project was now driven forwards, given the proposed major development that would be taking place, additional car parking provision was urgently needed.

Councillor Edyvean referred to the recent appointment of Councillor Gareth Williams as Mayor of Bingham and wished him good fortune in implementing the recommendations of the Board.

The Leader thanked Council for its support and agreed that everyone seemed to share the same feelings regarding this matter and reminded Council that it would receive an update in six months' time.

It was **RESOLVED**

a) that Council noted that report of the Bingham Improvement Board had been accepted by Bingham Town Council, at its meeting of 24 May 2022, and that the report had been endorsed y Cabinet at its meeting on 14 June 2022; and

b) that an update on progress against the Action Plan be received by Council in six months' time.

23 **Notices of Motion**

Having declared an interest, the Mayor left her seat but remained in the Council Chamber and did not take part in the debate or vote for this item and the Deputy Mayor took the Chair.

a. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor R Mallender

Council resolves to pledge its support to the maintenance and health of the Grantham Canal in the Borough of Rushcliffe as an integral wildlife and wellbeing corridor, and asks Communities Scrutiny Group to oversee the following actions:

- To raise awareness of the importance of the Grantham Canal with the wider community, the County Council, and other relevant agencies to ensure water is retained in the watered section of the Canal within Rushcliffe, to benefit the environment, Mental Health, Wellbeing and Sport.
- To raise awareness amongst the adjoining authorities through which the Grantham Canal passes.
- To review the Service Level Agreement with the Canal and Rivers Trust to include specific reference to water retention (it is due for renewal in 2024 and is being considered by Communities Scrutiny Group on 21 July 2022).
- To write to DEFRA requesting that it reclassify remainder waterways in order that they may benefit from Government funding in light of the health benefits of the canal environment which have been proven during Covid and the consequent lock down.

Councillor Clarke informed Council, in moving the motion that this related to the leisure corridor of the Grantham Canal and advised that the canal was leaking and losing water, and in turn losing important flora and fauna. Councillor Clarke referred to the importance of leisure and relaxation, particularly when associated with water in promoting health and wellbeing and stated that this had become even more important in the last few years due to Covid. The Council needed to ensure that the Government understood the value of waterways, such as the Grantham Canal, and the benefits that it brought, and reiterated that the motion was calling on DEFRA to reclassify the Grantham Canal and other remainder waterways, to ensure that it could receive funding for those vital repairs. Councillor Clarke referred to the process of 'Blue Prescribing' used by doctors, and the importance of such waterways in combating mental health issue and stated that it was vital that this valuable resource be protected. This motion was about conserving this valuable resource, and Councillor Clarke referred to the four main actions required, which were listed in the motion and asked that the motion be supported.

In seconding the motion, Councillor R Mallender stated that the Grantham Canal ran close by to a number of Rushcliffe's towns and villages, it was an asset to the Borough and provided a haven for wildlife, with a variety of habitats and a safe environment that people could enjoy. The canal was part of the Borough's shared history, as it had originally been built to transport various products between Grantham and Nottingham. The canal was a benefit to the environment and helped improve peoples' mental health, wellbeing, and sporting activities, especially during Covid lockdown. Councillor Mallender reminded Council that since 1968 the canal had been classified as a remainder waterway, which meant that maintenance would only take place if it was considered to be a health and safety issue. However, since that time canal use had evolved, with more leisure and social use, and that had coincided with the formation of various community groups, which helped to preserve, protect, and restore the canal, including the Grantham Canal Society, which undertook a great deal of restoration work. At Hickling, community works kept the Basin in water and in use, and at Lady Bay, the Friends of Lady Bay Canal worked to keep the canal as a wildlife corridor. In supporting all elements of the motion, Councillor Mallender stated that the most critical was to review the Service

Level Agreement with the Canal and Rivers Trust, to include specific reference to water retention, and it was pleasing to note that this would be considered by the Communities Scrutiny Group. Council was advised that much of the canal no longer contained any water, with other areas now critically low, and given that it was a haven for wildlife, it was important that it was saved.

In supporting the motion, Councillor J Walker stated how much she enjoyed visiting the Grantham Canal and had been shocked and saddened to see areas that she had recently cycled by where completely dry.

Councillor Price, speaking on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group confirmed that the Group would be supporting the motion, acknowledged the significant impact that this waterway had, particularly in urban areas, as both a leisure facility and a wildlife corridor, and hoped that this motion would lead to tangible action.

Councillor Thomas advised that whilst supporting the preservation and maintenance of the Grantham Canal, she questioned the motion's inclusion on the Council agenda, given that the issue would be considered by the Communities Scrutiny Group.

Councillor Butler reiterated previous comments and commended the volunteers who had worked to preserve and restore the canal and anything that could be done to raise the profile of the canal would be welcomed to safeguard it for the future.

Councillor S Mallender clarified that the original use of the canal had been to take night soil from the city of Nottingham, to be spread on the fields in Lincolnshire.

Councillor Moore stated that this issue was not new, as he had been aware of the problems since moving to the area in 1984. It was pleasing that this motion had been brought forward, as this was a big issue, which would require significant funding and support to move forward. If this motion was agreed, it would be very positive if the Borough Council could put pressure on DEFRA, as this frustrating situation had gone on for too long.

Councillor Upton raised concerns that if action was not taken soon then the whole canal would become dry within the next 18 months, and without water, it would lose most of the environmental and wellbeing benefits that it currently had. The canal was very well used by many during Covid, and although in the future it was unlikely that the whole canal would be restored, now was the time for significant investment, to save as much of the waterway as possible.

Councillor Clarke referred to the comment made by Councillor S Mallender regarding the night soil and confirmed that this had helped to improve agriculture in many areas around the canal basin. Councillor Clarke thanked Council for its support and reiterated that this motion was hopefully just the start of bringing this issue to the forefront and increasing awareness. In conclusion, Councillor Clarke stated that he hoped when the Communities Scrutiny Group considered the issue, that representatives of the Canal and Rivers Trust had been invited to the meeting.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

b. The following Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Robinson and seconded by Councillor Brennan.

From June 2022, over 40,000 railway workers, mainly represented by the RMT and ASLEF trades unions, are taking strike action, paralysing much of the UK's train network. This has and will impact on the residents of Rushcliffe and our local businesses with:

1. Worry and stress for hospital patients as appointments are delayed, cancelled, or rearranged
2. Some schools' exams being potentially disrupted
3. Many more cars on the roads causing congestion, delays, and a huge spike in pollution
4. Many workers unable to get to work
5. Holiday plans disrupted or cancelled
6. Uncertainty, inconvenience and increased costs for business and leisure travel

Other public sector Trades Unions are also threatening a summer of industrial action across a range of essential services at time when the economy is just beginning to recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic and many residents are facing a cost of living crisis.

As a Council, we call on the Unions calling these strikes and causing so much misery and inconvenience to our residents, to cease this industrial action immediately and get back to the negotiating table to seek an agreement.

The Leader informed Council, in moving the motion, that he supported the right of railway workers to withdraw their labour and strike. Council was reminded of the importance of the rail network and infrastructure that was used by many residents in Rushcliffe. The Leader informed Council that he had been contacted by many residents whose travel plans, and engagements had been impacted by the rail strikes and that he had been touched by their personal stories of frustration and, in some cases, despair. Council was reminded that difficulties in rail travel had also led to increased car usage resulting in more congestion on the roads and, longer term, more pollution. The Leader referred to the significant cost of the recent rail strike and highlighted the increased levels of stress and hardship for individuals and businesses during the post-Covid recovery period.

The Leader informed Council that the rail industry required modernisation and to adapt to the post-Covid era, to meet the needs of users, many of whom were Rushcliffe residents. The current strikes organised by the main rail unions were in protest to those changes; however, they were impacting on the very people that this Council was elected to represent, and this motion encouraged the rail unions to return to the negotiating table.

Councillor Brennan seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor J Walker stated that this motion was an attack on rail workers who were struggling to survive after years of austerity and stressed that the Labour Group would like to take the opportunity to show public solidarity for the rail workers and focus on building bridges rather than pointing the finger of blame. She proposed an amendment to the motion:

“As a Council, we call on the Government, Rail companies and the Unions, to cease this industrial action immediately and get back to the negotiating table to seek an agreement and end the misery that is being caused to some of our residents”.

In seconding the amendment to the motion, Councillor Gaunt advised that by calling upon the Government and rail companies to join the unions around the negotiating table, it recognised that a joint effort was required to resolve issues. Councillor Gaunt stated that the unions had been discussing those changes for the last two years and had been unable to reach agreement. Council was reminded that the rail network in this country was dependent on many different bodies and organisations working together and this did not work unless everybody was willing to do that. Councillor Gaunt questioned why this motion had been brought forward and challenged the scale of the impact of the rail strike on Rushcliffe’s residents. Council was also reminded that post-Covid many residents worked from home, or at least had the option to do so, negating the need for such frequent rail travel. Councillor Gaunt agreed that any delays to hospital appointments and treatment were unfortunate; however, he also considered that there had been delays due to the pandemic, and the disruption to foreign holidays was mainly caused by the chaos at the country’s airports recently. He also touched upon the cost-of-living crisis and stated that there were bigger problems impacting upon this Borough’s residents than a few days without trains.

The Mayor asked the Leader if he was willing to accept the amendment to the motion and the Leader advised that he would not, as he considered that the Government was not and should not be involved in negotiations of this kind.

Councillor Thomas stated that the rail unions faced very difficult decisions, and the Government was understandably very busy but there was little Rushcliffe could do to influence this situation. She asked that the debate be halted, and the discussion moved to the next item of business. This procedural motion was seconded by Councillor Way.

The Mayor exercised her discretion on receiving this procedural motion to allow those who had already indicated a desire to speak to do so.

Councillor R Mallender stated that he was supportive of the amendment, which would encourage the Government and rail companies to come together in an effort to resolve the dispute and considered it imperative that the Secretary of State should also be involved as disruption to the rail network had nationwide ramifications.

Councillor Jones expressed regret that the original motion had been brought forward to Council and pointed to proposed strikes in other areas that would

equally impact upon Rushcliffe residents but were, in many cases, being used as a last resort. Councillor Jones felt that the amendment to the motion put forward by Councillor J Walker added much needed balance and highlighted the part the Government needed to take in the negotiations.

The Chief Executive explained that a vote would now be taken on the procedural motion put forward by Councillor Thomas.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost and the debate on the amendment was resumed.

Councillor Gowland informed the Council that striking rail workers were not paid and added that the RMT had been trying to negotiate for two years but now felt that it had no choice but to strike to get the attention of Government. Council was informed that there needed to be compromise on both sides, additional Government funding could help to restore services, but it was not forthcoming and continued cuts had a massive impact on service standards, maintenance and safety.

Councillor S Mallender reiterated that people on strike did not get paid, though there were schemes to support those in dire circumstances. Council was advised that many rail workers were only earning minimum wage and did not take the decision to strike lightly. The consequences of the Government and the rail operators not working with the unions to resolve the issues was also impacting on the lowest paid rail staff.

Councillor Brennan reminded Council that rail operators were private companies and that this industrial action was likely to speed up the improvements that unions were against as rail operators struggled to deliver vital services. The pandemic had sped up the pace of change for workers and the rail companies needed to evolve and adapt too. Councillor Brennan agreed that workers had every right to strike; however, to add the Government and rail operators into this motion did not make sense as they were not on strike and could therefore not return to work. Councillor Brennan suggested taking the word ‘Government’ out of the motion but leaving rail companies in.

Councillor J Walker, in summing up, reminded Council that rail workers were striking over the right to fair pay and a safe working environment, and quoted from correspondence with a rail worker confirming that the unions were still negotiating, they had never stopped, but that other parties were required to take their place at the table for those negotiations to be effective.

Councillor Robinson advised that the Conservative Group would accept the motion if the word ‘Government’ was removed.

The Mayor asked Councillor J Walker if she was prepared to remove the word ‘Government’ from the amendment to the motion. Councillor Walker declined and the Mayor called a five-minute recess.

On resuming the meeting, Councillor J Walker asked for a recorded vote on the amendment to the motion. Councillors cast their votes as follows:

FOR: Councillors Begum, Gaunt, Gowland, Gray, R Mallender, S Mallender, Murray, Purdue-Horan, Shaw, Thomas, J Walker.

AGAINST: Councillors Adair, Bailey, Barney, Brennan, Buschman, Butler, Clarke, Cottee, Dickman, Edyvean, Healy, Inglis, Jeffreys, Mason, Moore, Phillips, Robinson, Upton, Virdi, R Walker, G Wheeler.

ABSTENTION: Councillors Beardsall, Combellack, Simms and Way.

On being put to the vote, the amendment to the motion was lost.

The Mayor asked if any Councillor wished to speak to the original motion.

Councillor Jones expressed his opposition to the motion and reiterated that the motion failed to recognise that strikes were also being proposed in other areas. In addition, the motion proposed that the unions started negotiations when in reality those had been ongoing over the last two years and continued to take place. He reminded Council that the primary factor behind the strikes was Government enforced efficiencies, which would effectively lead to reduced safety measures affecting both rail staff and passengers.

Councillor R Mallender informed Council that he would not be supporting the motion as he believed that the Government had an important role to play in resolving the issues that had left rail workers with no option but to strike.

Councillor Thomas reiterated that she felt the motion had nothing to do with the Council and that debating it at all had been inappropriate.

Councillor Gray asked Council to reflect on the previous item, which had covered the findings of the Bingham Town Council Improvement Board and asked whether this issue would really be at the forefront of residents' minds. He suspected that the current cost of living crisis was what residents really cared about and suggested that Council's time would be better spent discussing how it could alleviate financial concerns more locally.

Councillor Edyvean expressed his disappointment in the Chamber and reiterated that the intention behind the motion was to end a situation where everybody lost, and negotiations continued until a resolution could be mapped out.

Councillor Brennan expressed the desire to move on with the motion and proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Simms.

The amendment to the motion read:

"As a Council, we call on the train operators, and the Unions calling these strikes and causing so much misery and inconvenience to our residents, to cease this industrial action immediately and get back to the negotiating table to seek an agreement."

On being put to the vote, the amendment to the motion was accepted.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

The Mayor announced that given the time, it would not be possible to conclude all of the remaining business on the agenda and proposed that the meeting should move on to Item 12 Questions and that Motion c) be considered at the next meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the meeting move on to Item 12 Questions and that Motion c) be moved to the next ordinary Council meeting in September 2022.

24 **Questions from Councillors**

a. Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Brennan

> "The Climate Change Strategy says it will support residents but only in applying for grants - so will this Council, as other Councils have, urgently establish and promote a local, cost reducing scheme with a company installing solar panels to encourage residents to pay to have them installed on their homes?"

In response, Councillor Brennan confirmed that the Council already worked closely with a range of key public sector organisations to monitor the potential for such schemes, and historically the Council had supported a similar bulk buying scheme for energy suppliers run by Nottingham Energy Partnership, so the Council had some experience of this type of initiative. One of the issues was that the installation of such solar panels was usually fully paid for by residents, and the Council did not actually have to be involved. As a result, they were usually of most benefit to those who had the means to install panels anyway, so they did not address fuel poverty or perhaps those most in need, unlike schemes including LAD 2 and 3, where the Council had been focusing on properties with very poor thermal efficiency in the East Leake area.

Councillor Brennan advised that the Council would commit to continuing to investigate such opportunities, and she was aware that officers had already been in touch with the Midlands Energy Hub and Nottingham Energy Partnership, to explore if any companies were working in the Borough and wished to progress such a scheme that the Council could link into following the normal due diligence checks.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Jones stated that several other Councils such as those in Kent, Swindon, Cambridge, and Suffolk have made arrangements with assessed companies interested in local volume services, to provide reduced cost installations to paying residents and would this Council get on with promoting roof top micro-generation?

Councillor Brennan reiterated that the Council continued to monitor the situation and if an appropriate project was identified, which would provide value for money and due diligence, then it would be considered.

b. Question from Councillor Sue Mallender to Councillor Inglis.

"Why, when it's the Council policy to minimise use of weedkiller, has the Council been spraying glyphosates in Bridgford Park and on the Hook resulting in strips of dead grasses and other wild plants up to two feet wide alongside paths, fencing and adjacent children's play areas?"

In response, Councillor Inglis confirmed that sadly, this had been a case of human error, when a member of the grounds maintenance team, who was new to managing those spaces, had unfortunately operated from outdated information. This had now been rectified and all staff were aware of the new approaches and commitment to managing those sites in an environmentally sensitive manner.

In light of a previous Council Motion, Councillor Inglis advised that the Council over the last year, had significantly reduced the use of weed killer, from spraying eight times over the summer season to twice, and only at a small number of very specific sites, which required localised weed management. In addition to this, Streetwise had invested in the use of a mechanical path edge cutter to reduce the need for weed spraying along paths and edges in parks and footpaths. In preparation for Streetwise returning in-house on 1 September, the Council was designing site management plans for all of its parks and nature sites. Those were being developed with input from services across the Council and with the expertise of the horticulturalists in the ground's maintenance division. This would result in even further gains in the development and sustainability of the Council's environmental management practice.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Mallender asked why no public apology had been made for this mistake?

Councillor Inglis advised that he was unaware that an apology had not been made and stated that he was happy to give an apology now.

The meeting closed at 9.47 pm.

CHAIRMAN