

**MINUTES  
OF THE MEETING OF THE  
CABINET  
TUESDAY, 12 MAY 2020**

Held virtually at 2.00 pm and live streamed on  
the Rushcliffe Borough Council YouTube channel

**PRESENT:**

Councillors S J Robinson (Chairman), D Mason (Vice-Chairman), A Edyvean,  
R Inglis, G Moore and R Upton

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillors Gray, Jones, R. Mallender and Thomas

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

P Linfield	Executive Manager - Finance and Corporate Services
K Marriott	Chief Executive
D Mitchell	Executive Manager - Communities
S Sull	Monitoring Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

**APOLOGIES:**

There were no apologies

**59 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**60 Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 March 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10 March 2020 were declared a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**61 Opposition Group Leaders' Questions**

Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Moore.

“What are the arrangements during the lock down period, which apply to rent owed by residential tenants in financial hardship, by charities and by SMEs in Rushcliffe?”

Councillor Moore responded by saying that the Council did not deal directly with residential tenants from a housing perspective but the Council was working very closely with Registered Social Housing Providers who were putting in significant measures to support tenants financially. In terms of Council Tax, the Council had introduced a Hardship Policy to allocate over £0.5m of funding and this was covered in the Delegated Decisions report. 1,800 residents who were in receipt of working age Council Tax reductions had

been given a £150 reduction on their Council Tax.

Regarding SMEs, the Council had proactively applied retail, hospitality and leisure business rates relief totalling around £10m and paid out business grants to 1,395 businesses totalling £17m, which equated to 83% of all the businesses in Rushcliffe. There was a new Discretionary Business Rates Grant, which would also be allocated, and was covered in the Delegated Decisions report. Officers were thanked for their hard work and efficiency and the Council had received many grateful responses from residents and businesses.

For businesses that were suffering hardship, the Council had revised repayment arrangements and for the Council's own commercial tenants, introduced payment holidays when requested. The Council had also sign posted businesses to the range of Government loans available. Retail charities were mainly covered by the grant and relief schemes as mentioned.

Councillor Jones asked a supplementary question to Councillor Moore.

“Thinking of tenants who get no financial help for lost income, such as private cleaners. Has the Council encouraged private landlords and Housing Associations, to which we have good relations, to forego rent for the period of lockdown and if not, would you consider doing so?”

Councillor Moore responded by stating that in respect of Housing Associations, considerable work had been undertaken to protect tenants and ensure that no one was evicted. He was unable to comment about the private sector, although he would be happy to supply an answer in the next seven days.

As a point of clarification, the Chief Executive advised that the Council had paid out over 83% of grants to eligible businesses and claimants in Rushcliffe and not 83% of businesses.

Question from Councillor Jones to Councillor Inglis.

“Has the establishment of track and trace arrangements resulted in the Council's Environment Health expertise being in charge locally?”

Councillor Inglis responded by stating that the contact tracing arrangements were being led nationally by Public Health England and they were working with a range of professional bodies and the local Directors of Public Health (DPH). In turn the DPH's would be working closely with local authority Environmental Health teams through the Local Resilience Forum to support the national response where required. However, the situation was evolving and in the early stages of information.

Councillor Jones asked a supplementary question to Councillor Inglis.

“Do I take it that we are confident that local people with local knowledge in Environmental Health will be involved, although you do not know the timescale?”

Councillor Inglis advised that currently timescales were unknown as it was

being led at a national level and it would be filtered through to regional and borough level.

As a point of clarification, the Chief Executive advised that the Executive Manager – Neighbourhoods had a background in Environmental Health and was involved in this work as it was progressing and developing. Local knowledge was key and the Council was working on that.

Question from Councillor Richard Mallender to Councillor Edyvean.

“When will the Council be re-opening the various contact centres around the Borough including the new one in West Bridgford?”

Councillor Edyvean responded by stating that the Council would only reopen its customer facing contact centres when Government guidance allowed it and no date was currently available. Some facilities were located in buildings not managed by the Council and the Council would work with those service providers. The Council was considering how it would provide the safest environment for visitors and staff at the West Bridgford contact centre and its other centres once they reopened. Although face-to-face access for customers was not currently possible, access to the Council’s advisors continued via telephone and email.

Councillor Mallender asked a supplementary question to Councillor Edyvean.

“Will the Council give consideration when the centres do reopen to constructing or putting in place shelters and possibly seating outside the contact centres as a number of shops have done locally to provide residents with shelter from the inclement weather?”

Councillor Edyvean confirmed that the Council was looking at measures for managing people and he would provide a written response within the next seven days.

Question from Councillor Gray to Councillor Robinson.

"I would first like to extend a thank you from the Labour group to the Cabinet and the officers of the Council for their hard work and decisive action in this unprecedented time.

We would like to support you as best we can in this time and would ask:

How can we fulfil our role as a critical friend and work together to look at the Council’s response to the COVID pandemic and be more involved going forwards?"

Councillor Robinson responded by thanking Councillor Gray for his comments and confirming that the Council’s cross-party scrutiny system was well established and the input from those meetings was welcomed. Scrutiny meetings would resume in July 2020, some member groups were being held in June 2020 and monthly Group Leaders meetings were taking place. Budget workshops were being arranged for September 2020 and all Councillors would be notified of those dates shortly. He would continue to be happy to respond to

any queries from the opposition groups.

Councillor Gray asked a supplementary question to Councillor Robinson.

“Would you agree, in this new way of working it is going to take some significant cultural change in the Council for everyone to get used to distance and online working and the sooner we start to meet online, whether formally or informally the better and the easier we will adjust to this change?”

Councillor Robinson agreed that it was important to have this communication and confirmed that all Councillors would meet at the full Council meeting in July 2020. As referred to previously, scrutiny groups would resume their meetings in July 2020 and regular Group Leaders meeting would continue to take place.

Question from Councillor Thomas to Councillor Edyvean.

“As stated in Para 5.3 of the report on emergency decisions:

"reopening leisure facilities will be a challenging operation with elements of social distancing likely to be in place for the foreseeable future".

With this being the case, and given the challenges developing in the budget, is the council reconsidering the timetable for the Bingham Leisure Centre capital project, and if so, are there plans for the relevant member group to meet to discuss before tender documents go out?”

Councillor Edyvean responded by stating that at the Cabinet meeting in June 2020, a report would be considered where permission to proceed with tender would be covered, subject to the Covid-19 impact. The Council would need to review all capital projects not yet started and it was anticipated that a revised budget would be reviewed in September 2020. The Bingham Leisure Centre Member Working Group would be reconvened shortly for a full update.

Councillor Thomas asked a supplementary question of Councillor Edyvean.

“Has consideration been given to the fact that the design may need to be altered to facilitate social distancing going forward?”

Councillor Edyvean advised that he would provide a written response within the next seven days.

Question from Councillor Thomas to Councillor Moore.

“Are there any plans to resume car park charges?”

Councillor Moore responded by stating that the Council would continue to follow both Government advice and adopt a ‘common sense’ approach in terms of when it would be the appropriate time to re-introduce car parking charges. The Council would balance the impact of the decision in terms of supporting the local retail sector, and most importantly still considering the health and well-being of the community and lastly the ongoing financial impact to the Council. The community would be notified of when that was planned in due course.

## 62 Citizens' Questions

There were no questions.

## 63 Delegated Decisions for Covid-19

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership presented the report of the Chief Executive outlining the Council's activities to deal with the impacts of Covid-19.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership stated that the report highlighted the urgent decisions that have been made by the Chief Executive, through delegated authority, in collaboration with the Leader and the relevant Portfolio Holder. The report reflected the severity of the crisis and the legislative powers put in place under the Coronavirus Act to enable virtual meetings to take place. This Cabinet meeting was the first virtual meeting, and it was not anticipated that the circumstances which had necessitated urgent delegated decision-making would continue in the same way.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership referred to the list of decisions taken which were detailed in the report and had been split into operational and urgent decisions. The report also highlighted the closure of the various leisure centres around the Borough, which were operated by Lex/Parkwood Leisure. Due to the nature of the leisure business and the closure of the facilities, Parkwood had requested financial assistance and that had been agreed at £106k per month, which would amount to £357k for three months. At the Cabinet meeting on 10 March 2020, it had been agreed to vary the Parkwood contract and that would now have to be reviewed following the three-month period. The Council would continue to review both the contract and payments as it received Government advice regarding opening and managing leisure facilities. The report referred to the Council Tax Support Grant allocation of £515k and highlighted the important principle that the funding had been allocated to those most in need and that had been the underpinning principle across all the Council's funding to residents and businesses. Details of the Business Rates Discretionary Grant were included in the report, with delegated authority to the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services and the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Business and Transformation. The report referred to the Coronavirus Act and Council meetings, highlighting that the Council was now able to hold virtual meetings until May 2021. The Council's Constitution would be updated and considered at full Council in July 2020, to reflect those requirements going forward. Interim arrangements to continue with planning have been put in place and were detailed in the report, with the first virtual Planning Committee on 14 May 2020.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Mason thanked the Chief Executive and officers for their hard work and diligence. Over the last few weeks, so much had happened and Rushcliffe had acted very quickly to take action. The Government was constantly reviewing procedures as was the Council and further changes would affect how the Council worked in the future.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership asked that the Chief Executive pass on his thanks to all employees. Councillors, residents and businesses were hugely appreciative of their work and effort and how well

the Council had reacted to the crisis.

**It was RESOLVED that**

- a) the decisions made under delegated urgency provisions as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report be endorsed and that these should be exempted from call in on the grounds of urgency at the time the decision was made, and not subsequently;
- b) that a variation to the Parkwood/Lex leisure contract be negotiated, to cover the period when leisure centres have to remain closed due to Covid-19 and the Section 151 Officer (in consultation with the Monitoring Officer) be granted delegated authority to agree the contract variation;
- c) a report with recommendations on the future contractual arrangements and the variation with Parkwood/Lex Leisure be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting;
- d) the Council Tax Support grant policy paper (Appendix 1) to be endorsed by Full Council (as part of a revised Covid-19 Budget later in the year) be agreed; and
- e) the potential Discretionary Business Rates Grant Fund broad parameters (Appendix 3) be noted and once final guidance is received from central government, the delegation of completing Rushcliffe's final discretionary scheme to the portfolio holders for Finance and Business and Transformation; and the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services be approved.

**64 Budget Update**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report of the Executive Manager – Finance and Corporate Services outlining the budget position as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's budget would change as the Council was informed about further proposals to release lockdown, and it was intended to report the ongoing impact to Cabinet each month. A revised budget would be presented to Council in September 2020, with Budget Workshops for all Councillors held earlier in September. The impact had been significant for the Borough as a whole and the Council had welcomed Government support; however, that support would be insufficient, even in the short term to meet the budget shortfall. For this financial year, the budget shortfall was expected to be between £2.5m and £4m. Going forward, it was likely that there would be additional pressures on the budget from the Council's Transformation and Capital Programmes. The report referred to Revenue Budget pressures, which were clearly linked to losses of income and if that continued for the remainder of the year, the Council would see significant losses from car parking, Development Control, investment interest and loss of rental income from commercial properties. The Council was also incurring additional costs, in particular to support Parkwood Leisure to ensure that the leisure centres were in a position to resume services once able to do so. The report referred to the

Council's Capital Programme and two main risks; the potential shortfall and delay of capital receipts, and the requirement to reassess the viability of existing capital projects. Treasury related issues would be reported in detail to the Governance Scrutiny Group. Due to the likely impact on the Revenue Budget, there was scope to revise the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) in relation to the Arena and to release New Homes Bonus to support the budget in the medium term. The report highlighted a number of the Council's investments, which had lost capital value. Those were long-term investments and it was hoped that their value would correct over time. The impact on the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates was unknown and the Cabinet would receive a further update in June 2020. Officers had worked extremely hard to ensure that Business Grants had been paid as soon as possible, with 1,395 businesses receiving approximately £17m, which was 83% of all eligible businesses in Rushcliffe. The Council had received many grateful responses and all Cabinet members appreciated the hard work undertaken by employees, not just for this but also for all the work undertaken throughout the Borough. It was important to note that over the years, the excellent stewardship of the Council's finances had given a degree of protection against the economic consequences of Covid-19. The financial resilience of the Council going forward would now be severely tested and would require a revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to deliver its corporate objectives. Going forward difficult decisions would have to be made; however, the Council was confident that it had the ability to lead the Borough through the crisis.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Edyvean reiterated the thanks given to all employees for their hard work. The importance of monitoring the impact of Covid-19 on Council budgets was noted, as was the need to look forward to how the Council could revitalise the prosperity of the Borough.

Councillor Robinson referred to the Business Grants and the decision of the Government to use Borough and District Councils to administer payments and it was a credit to Councils across the country that it had been achieved so efficiently. Officers were again thanked for their efforts. It was prudent and pragmatic that the Council reviewed its budget and that would be taken to Council in September 2020.

**It was RESOLVED that:**

- a) the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) be noted and that a revised budget be supported and taken to Full Council once there is more certainty regarding the impact of lockdown and in particular the likely use of Reserves and Balances to meet the projected budget gap;
- b) the position on both Council investments and the likelihood of a change in the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) calculation which will be reported to the Governance Scrutiny Group in the Annual Capital and Investment Report be noted; and
- c) the Leader and Chief Executive be supported in making representations to Government and other interest groups to unlock further funding for the benefit of Rushcliffe's community and its businesses.

65 **Draft Character Appraisal and Proposed Conservation Area for Cropwell Bishop**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing presented the report of the Executive Manager - Communities requesting approval to commence formal public engagement for the purposes of designating a new Conservation Area for the village of Cropwell Bishop.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing stated that for areas, which fulfilled the criteria, the local authority had a statutory duty to designate them as Conservation Areas. Following representation from the Cropwell Bishop Village Heritage Group, local residents, the Parish Council and local Councillors, various meetings have taken place and in accordance with best practice, a draft Character Appraisal had been produced. The next step would be for Cabinet to agree the principle of a Conservation Area for Cropwell Bishop and to approve the draft Character Appraisal and to agree to a public consultation. Following that consultation, any comments would be considered and a Management Plan produced, before a further report was submitted to Cabinet requesting a formal adoption.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Inglis referred to the unique and historical features of Cropwell Bishop and the importance of this designation. All parties involved were thanked for their hard work and diligence and it was hoped that the consultation would reflect the same desire and enthusiasm that the project had generated. It was hoped that Cabinet would be able to support the positive outcome in the near future.

Councillor Robinson referred to the importance of this for Cropwell Bishop and noted the value of Conservation Areas to other villages in Rushcliffe and the advantages they gave in helping to preserve the character of an area.

Councillor Moore, as Ward Councillor referred to the hard work and determination of the Heritage Group in bringing this forward and thanked the Service Manager, Communities, Planning and Growth and Conservation Officers for their hard work and support.

**It is RESOLVED that**

- a) the village of Cropwell Bishop would appear to possess qualities of special architectural and historic interest which would warrant its designation as a conservation area under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- b) the Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal and proposed conservation area boundary be approved for the purposes of public consultation, to last a period of 21 days and to include a public consultation event held in the village (timing of consultation and event will be influenced by any restrictions arising from the Coronavirus Pandemic); and
- c) a subsequent report following public consultation which may include a recommendation for the formal adoption of a revised conservation area



character appraisal and for the designation of a conservation area for Cropwell Bishop be submitted to a future Cabinet meeting.

The meeting closed at 2.42 pm.

CHAIRMAN