

MINUTES OF COUNCIL

23 NOVEMBER 2022

PRESENT:

The Mayor (Councillor Ms Watson-Merret), Councillors Mrs Allanach, Mrs A'Barrow, Mrs Brown, Mrs Crane, Daly, Miss Dumbleton, Eccleson, Edwards, Mrs Garcia, Gillias, Harrington, Mrs Hassell, Miss Lawrence, Lawrence, Lewis, Ms Livesey, Mahoney, Ms Maoudis, Mistry, 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, Dr Williams and Willis.

37. SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL STANDING ORDERS

Due to the lengthy agenda and the number of motions and possible amendments, it was moved by the Mayor, seconded by the Deputy Mayor and

RESOLVED THAT – paragraphs 13.6 (g) and (h) of Part 3A of the Council Standing Orders be suspended.

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Douglas, Ellis and Lowe.

39. MINUTES

The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 28 September 2022 were approved and signed by the Mayor.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 7(a) of Part 1 – UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Councillor Lewis (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a trustee of Rugby Bareboards Trust).

Item 1(b) of Part 2 – Capital Programme 2022/23 – Queen's Diamond Jubilee Centre and Section 106 funding - Councillor Lewis (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of Rugby Sport for the Disabled).

41. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) It was with sadness that the Council had learned of the passing of Richard Dobbs, an employee of the Council on 7 November. Richard was a valued member of the Works Services team for over 23 years.

The Council's thoughts were with Richard's family and colleagues at this difficult time. The Mayor and all those present at the meeting stood in a moment's silence in memory of Richard.

(b) The Council recently received a trophy in recognition of the part the borough played in bringing the Queen's Baton Relay to the community as part of the Commonwealth Games this year. The trophy would be displayed in the Mayor's Parlour and reflected the Council's commitment as part of its Corporate Strategy to the importance of leisure and wellbeing for our residents and bringing communities together.

(c) Members had been informed that the Council took the winning trophy at this year's West Midlands Tri-Sector Challenge as well as winning the Leadership award. The team was also nominated in all awards categories at the event.

Teams of six from organisations across Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands went head-to-head in the all-day management challenge at Birmingham's Conference Aston.

Faced with a scenario of having to deliver quality public services while managing limited resources, all teams had to identify priorities, deal with politically sensitive issues and maintain customer focus by using skills such as political awareness, partnership-working, problem solving and effective communication.

The council's team - comprising of Sarah Chapman, Caroline Barnes, Henry Biddington, Sally Godden, Emma Tomlinson and Claire Waleczek - entered the challenge bearing the added pressure of the Council being the reigning champions, but ensured the trophy returned to Rugby.

The Mayor congratulated all of the officers on their achievement.

42. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10

The following questions were 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.

A. Councillor Srivastava asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

"Nationally the number of Ukrainian arrivals presenting to Council as being homeless continues to rise, with the latest government figure showing 670 households in temporary accommodation nationwide.

Could the Leader of this Council tell us if any of the Ukrainian's arrivals in Rugby are facing similar homeless issues and if so, how many have approached RBC for help?"

Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

“11 Ukrainian citizens have approached the Council for housing advice. I am happy to confirm that all have been dealt with via housing advice and follow ups to prevent their needing to progress a homelessness application.

County wide, the district, borough and County councils are working together to prevent homelessness for this cohort. Hosted by North Warwickshire Council, securing funding from the county, a project is in place that actively reaches out to sponsors and guests to understand the potential of homelessness arising within the cohort, and to put in place early remedies and advice. This is separate to the PHIL project which covers just Rugby, Stratford and North Warwickshire. In addition, the district and borough housing advice teams are on hand to support through the usual routes.”

B. Councillor Mrs Brown asked the Finance, Performance, Legal and Governance Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ms Robbins:

“Will the Portfolio Holder update Council on progress towards informing Rugby residents of new voter ID requirements and will Council be provided with regular progress updates?”

Councillor Ms Robbins, Finance, Performance, Legal and Governance Portfolio Holder, provided the following response:

“The new voter ID requirements are subject to secondary legislation which is presently being debated in Parliament. The secondary legislation will provide the relevant detail in respect of the various requirements, and this will be supported by guidance from the Electoral Commission.

A member conversation is scheduled on 8th December, and this will be delivered by the Returning Officer. This session will provide additional detail of the various requirements and the overall delivery of Voter ID.”

C. Councillor Ellis asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe and the Regulation and Safety Portfolio Holder, Councillor Poole:

“The Rugby Suez site has a protracted history; originally envisaged to sit 200 feet below the ground in a quarry in Southam. Rejected by Councils in the south - it was located to Rugby, and it sits proud on the A4071 to the rear of two residential communities of Newbold and New Bliton along a major route for school children, walking to Avon valley school. For those unaware: The Suez plant manufactures and transports shredded plastic particles into 'Climafuel' for burning at Cemex.

Can I ask both the Environment Portfolio Holder and also the Leader of this Council if they are aware of the issue of microplastics on the A4071, if they have plans to deal with microplastics on the A4071 and if they have had any communications with the Environment agency as to their source?”

Councillors Lowe and Poole, provided the following response:

“We are aware of the environmental impact this site is having on the local area. General plastic and paper litter is a problem and attempts to keep it clean by regularly litter picking is positive, but not completely effective. Micro plastics are now known to be a major health issue and so it makes safe and improved operation of the site even more important.

While we are not main regulators for the site, our officers in Environmental Health and Community Safety are local pollution experts and regulators for other sites, and have been working with the Environment Agency to try to deal with the general issues of waste being deposited on route or escaping from the site. The Environment Agency have expressed a wish to meet councillors to discuss.

In addition, the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive are engaging with CEMEX on a number of issues including pollution.

I have asked officers to arrange meetings of interested parties including Warwickshire County Council who approved the planning permission, the Environment Agency as the regulator of the site, Suez, CEMEX, and local councillors to discuss the options for controlling these dangerous pollutants, and determine the right way forward, which I am advised may be to raise this as an issue for improved legislation with the Secretary of State.”

D. Councillor Slinger asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“What was the response of the Council to a letter sent to the Leader of the Council by Ed Green, CEO, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, on 3 October, that was shared with Labour Councillors and that details the following:

- a. The “anger and distress” caused to the 26,000 members of the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust about the Conservative government’s “attack on nature” through its plans to abolish all EU regulations, and that new Investment Zones will be exempted from rules protecting wildlife habitats;
- b. Concerns about the “abandonment of a post-Brexit change in agricultural subsidies away from public money for public services and back to payments based only on how much land someone owns”;
- c. Local “acute” concern that Rugby Borough Council may “plan to propose Investment Zone sites which would see the loss of nationally and internationally protected sites through a new process which undermines local democracy” by only allowing 10 days to apply and engage stakeholders (and no definition of which stakeholders should be engaged); and
- d. Concerns that local people may well see “fast-tracked, massive scale development and house building imposed on them, destroying local wildlife sites and undermining the recovery of nature with the laws carefully designed to balance such things swept aside, and no opportunity to influence what is happening to their communities.”

Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

“Following the receipt of this letter, I have spoken to the CEO of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust over the telephone. I have also written to him explaining that the introduction of Investment Zones was brought forward by the previous Prime Minister, Liz Truss, and that the current status of Investment Zones under the new Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, is yet to be clarified.

I have explained that following the announcement of Investment Zones, a very short time period was given to Councils to put forward potential sites, for consideration. Due to the potential detrimental impact on biodiversity and recognising the Borough's already strong performance in attracting investment, where employment growth is buoyant, the Council did not submit any sites for consideration.

I have welcomed the positive discussions which have taken place to ensure that the Council's ambitions regarding the climate, nature and biodiversity crisis align closely to those of the Wildlife Trust and have invited the CEO of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to meet with me to further discuss the specific issues raised.”

E. Councillor Slinger asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“In light of the campaign by the Mental Health Foundation to raise awareness of the growing problem of loneliness, and of the ‘Boost Your Health Esteem’ campaign being run by the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System:

- a) does the Council plan to take part in any projects designed to tackle loneliness within Rugby Borough?
- b) has the Council made any assessment of whether its service users are suffering from loneliness?
- c) has the Council made any assessment of what capabilities it has, as a service-provider, to help people overcome loneliness?”

Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

"The Council is aware of the various campaigns that seek to support people with concerns for health and wellbeing including the mentioned Loneliness campaigns.

I am pleased to confirm the Council have a variety of projects that are currently being delivered through the Rugby Art Gallery and Museum and Sport and Recreation Services that are directly and indirectly supporting residents who may be suffering from loneliness.

At Rugby Art Gallery and Museum, the following projects are currently taking place with the remit of tackling loneliness:

- The Good Times – This project supports adults living with dementia and their carers
- The Express Group – A social prescription project receives GP referrals of individuals who identify themselves to the GP as lonely and is run in partnership with the Benn Partnership Centre.
- Sheltered Housing Workshops - Arts and Crafts workshops are delivered across Rugby Borough Council's sheltered housing accommodation that look to engage local communities and increase social wellbeing between residents.
- "Warm Hub Drop-ins" – New sessions are starting in December on Tuesday afternoons with open sessions where residents can drop in, have refreshment and engage in light activities such as crafts, board games and puzzles.
- Rugby Art Gallery and Museum also work in partnership with Barnados delivering mother and baby sessions for new parents and mother and toddler with outreach sessions to support local mothers who may be feeling lonely and isolated.

The Borough's Sport and Recreation team supports a series of locally led volunteer health walks where residents can engage with friendly groups who access various open spaces across the borough.

Whilst not specifically targeting loneliness, the Council supports a number of volunteer groups across the Borough, including our parks and open spaces helping to manage local spaces, encouraging individuals to engage with projects and participate in leisure and wellbeing activities.

With reference to the Mental Health Foundation, the Communications team will utilise its social media channels to share campaigns across the Borough, including campaigns such as Mental Health Awareness Week that occurs annually in May.

The Council's Communities and Homes team continues to work with WCAVA and the voluntary sector to promote opportunities across the borough for sessions.

This includes engagement and communication with organisations such as Compassionate Communities and Age UK whereby Council officers and facilities are utilised to support service delivery to the residents."

F. Councillor Ms Livesey asked the Chair of Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Eccleson:

"What communications, meetings or discussions have taken place with West Midlands Ambulance Trust. If no progress has been made, what steps have been taken to ensure a meeting takes place?"

Councillor Eccleson, Chair of Scrutiny Committee, provided the following response:

“The recent Scrutiny Committee that took place on 14th November passed a resolution in respect of the scoping paper for a task and finish group. The task and finish group will now commence work with a view to bringing forward a recommendation to the Scrutiny Committee.”

G. Councillor Ms Livesey asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“Which buildings in the Borough have been identified as suitable Warm Banks and what steps have been taken to prepare for their establishment and to notify residents of their location, opening times and services available?”

Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

“We will be undertaking a survey of council owned buildings to understand their capacity for delivering warm hubs, for example, libraries and museums offering extended opening hours where possible and working alongside our funded Community Organisations to explore a warm hub network in Rugby.

We will be encouraging the VCS sector, along with businesses, to make known to us any designated warm spaces so that we can increase awareness to residents of their availability, along with other publicly accessible premises that can be used.

In Spring 2023, we will follow up with VCS groups and businesses offering warm spaces to get an understanding of take up of their use.

This information will then be distributed through our trusted and appropriate channels to ensure our local residents are informed.”

H. Councillor Harrington asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“Currently, with the cost of living the crisis, several companies like Tesco, Sainsbury’s and Aldi have given two pay rises to their staff in the last 12 months.

According to the living wage foundation, the hourly rate should be £10.90. Is this council paying staff a living wage to help during this crisis? Does this also include contracted staff who work on behalf of the council?”

Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

“On 6 January 2014 Cabinet approved the payment of the national living wage for employees directly employed by the Council and through the annual Pay

Policy statement review report details on this are presented. The report for 2021/22 was presented at the Council meeting on 19 July 2022.

As approved on 3 November, Rugby Borough Council will be paying all staff the nationally agreed 2022/23 cost of living increase of £1,925 plus the agreed 4.04% on any allowances associated with the role. This will be paid as part of the November salary payment.

Although agreed at a national level the Council will also implement any rises for the 2023/24 financial year. At this stage negotiations have not begun.”

I. Councillor Ms Livesey asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“Will the Leader of the Council work with senior officers and the new data analyst to enable the construction of a data dashboard, using suitable software such as Power BI , Tableau etc, of key social and financial indicators for the town, drawing on extant data sources such as NomisWeb, JSNA, IMD, 2021 census as data becomes available etc, and to keep this updated and published on the council website.

Councillor Lowe, Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

“Senior Officers and the data analyst are already working together to create a wide variety of strategic and operational reports and dashboards for a multitude of outcomes. Amongst these is a forecasting dashboard incorporating the latest Experian Mosaic data integrated with our own internal analytics to pinpoint areas of need, to be able to target information, marketing and support, focussing on prevention and early intervention.

This is just one example of the way we are using business intelligence and data to support our businesses and communities.

To ensure transparency on appropriate analytics, dashboards will be published that are appropriate for public consumption.”

J. Councillor Sandison asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“Further to the Liberal Democrat motion in the name of Cllr Jerry Roodhouse, seconded by Cllr Neil Sandison on 28 September, what progress if any has been made on points 1, 3, and 4 regarding energy efficiency and our request for a monthly progress report from the Leader and Chief Executive to all Members?”

[For information – motion, as approved, detailed below:

*“Council requests that the **Scrutiny Committee** considers all strategies drive towards helping residents and reduce fuel poverty in the Borough.*

*This **could** be achieved by:*

- 1. continuing to improve the energy efficiency of all the Borough's housing stock*
- 2. stronger enforcement of existing regulations on energy efficiency and property standards, particularly in the private rented sector*
- 3. publishing a statement of intent and setting locally appropriate eligibility criteria to access Energy Company Obligation funding via the Local Authority Flexibility arrangements (as managed by Ofgem)*
- 4. seeking and leveraging in extra funds to improve the energy efficiency standards of all housing*
- 5. maximising the incomes of low-income households through the efficient delivery of Council-administered benefits, sensitive recovery of debt and the provision of advice and support*
- 6. holding a summit with all partners including other local authorities to put in place an action plan that supports residents who are struggling with the increased costs.*
- 7. working in partnership with local community groups in supporting vulnerable residents.*

*We also request that the **Scrutiny Committee** reports on progress on tackling the cost-of-living increases on residents to all Members.”]*

Councillor Lowe, the Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

“A Special Scrutiny Committee was held on 14th November to consider the Cost of Living crisis. I would refer Cllr Sandison to the report considered by the Committee which outlined the work undertaken by officers in supporting residents and businesses in respect of the cost-of-living crisis. As set out within the resolution by Scrutiny Committee, a cross party sub group will be formulated to support the present work streams and action plan and this group will provide regular updates to the Scrutiny Committee and wider members.”

K. Councillor Sandison asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Lowe:

“Energy prices continue to be persistently high and above pre 2019 prices because of the burning of fossil fuels like gas to produce electricity. Renewable energy prices have remained competitive and good value. What progress has the council made at weening itself off fossil fuel generated energy towards renewable energy sources?”

Councillor Lowe, the Leader of the Council, provided the following response:

“Last year the Council commissioned a Carbon Management Plan to map out the steps that need to be taken for the Council to achieve the objectives of reducing carbon emissions and becoming Net Zero Carbon by 2030. The recruitment of a dedicated Decarbonisation Projects Officer to progress this

plan has now taken place and this officer is expected take up their post in January.

Currently, the Council's electricity is supplied from 100% renewable green energy sources. The Council's gas supply is not currently supplied via a green tariff due to the current cost implications of doing so. Despite the reduced ongoing cost to suppliers of renewable energy, prices for obtaining renewable energy vs non-renewable sources remain comparable due to how the energy market works within the United Kingdom, and National Grid electric supply infrastructure being so reliant on gas supplies and that associated cost."

L. Councillor Edwards asked the Communities, Homes, Digital and Communications Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs Crane:

"In light of the recent Coroner's decision regarding damp homes and the rented sector, including Housing Associations, could the Portfolio Holder update this Council as to what actions have been taken to strengthen Rugby Borough Council's Private Rented Sector Charter and what actions are being taken to strengthen communication between this Council and Housing Associations within the Borough?"

Councillor Mrs Crane, Communities, Homes, Digital and Communications Portfolio Holder, provided the following response:

"The impact of mould on health in all housing is well known and is an existing priority for Council staff dealing with our own housing, the private rented sector, Registered Providers and owner occupiers. A search of our website will show the advice we already provide. The Private Rented Sector Charter, or more specifically the guidance published with it, is regularly reviewed and updated. It is of great concern that it has taken the death of a child to bring this to public awareness, and we send our most heartfelt condolences to the family of the child. However, it is important to say that we already work closely with housing providers and tenants and will monitor new recommendations e.g. the Housing Ombudsman's recommendation for the government Decent Homes Standard to be improved, and the improvements planned in the government's Social Housing (Regulation) Bill. If improvements in the service can be identified, we will work to meet them. Officers have already met internally to start drafting an action plan to improve mould prevention and improved responses to complaints in our own stock."

M. Councillor Roodhouse asked the Operations and Traded Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Miss Lawrence:

"Could the Portfolio Holder state what the average number of days to repair a void property is, how many void properties the Council has at this point in time and how does this figure compare over a 6-month period?"

Councillor Miss Lawrence, Operations and Traded Services Portfolio Holder, provided the following response:

“The Property Repairs Service and Housing Team have recently classified the voids into minor, standard and major voids, with turnaround times agreed for each. These are, up to 7 days for a minor, up to 4 weeks for a standard and up to 8 weeks for major voids.

Before the classifications were agreed, the average turnaround time was 13.5 days across all types.

There are currently 33 void properties at the moment, on average it is the same as the last 6 months, although the trend is increasing, and the team have advised that they are starting to see more coming in.”

N. Councillor Sandison asked the Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder, Councillor Picker:

“What planning gain would the portfolio holder hope to see in terms of transport infrastructure in terms of redevelopment of the former prime retail area bordered by North Street, Evreux Way and Corporation Street?”

Councillor Picker, Growth and Investment Portfolio Holder, provided the following response:

“It is usual for all major planning applications that are determined by the Council to be accompanied by a legal agreement, normally referred to a S106 agreement, which secures money or works for infrastructure and / or social housing to mitigate the impacts of the development.

Every site is considered on its own merit and every s106 agreement is agreed depending on the individual circumstances of the site and the impacts that need to be mitigated. This is necessary to ensure that each agreement meets the requirement of Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations.

The emerging Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and the amendments to the Supplementary Planning Document for Planning Obligations which is currently out for public consultation set out what the aspirations are for transport infrastructure and how these could be secured. In addition, Warwickshire County Council are also developing a Local Transport Plan which will also provide a guide for transport improvements.

The Council is also looking to adopt a Local Community Infrastructure Levy which is also out for public consultation with an Examination expected in the Spring. Once adopted many schemes would be subject to a charge per sqm rather than individual agreements.

Transport matters are also a matter for Warwickshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority. As part of their responses to the planning application they will provide comment on any highway improvements required,

contributions towards public transport infrastructure and any other highway / transport mitigation measures.”

O. Councillor Ms Livesey asked the Communities, Homes, Digital and Communications Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs Crane:

“What discussions have taken place with Open Reach and/or City Fibre to lever social benefit for digitally excluded residents of Rugby, through the provision of free sim-enabled tablets and free basic IT skills training?”

Councillor Mrs Crane, Communities, Homes, Digital and Communications Portfolio Holder, provided the following response:

“The fibre infrastructure providers have been involved in conversations to provide signposting information to appropriate agencies and organisations who can assist residents who are digitally excluded.

Information gathered is provided to our frontline service staff, members and publicly to work towards closing the digital gap. Digital exclusion schemes from BT, Sky, EE, Talk Talk, Vodafone and the Good Things Foundation are examples of how digital inclusion and connectivity can be increased, alongside assistance scheme such as social tariffs, all of which are included within the information gathered.

This information is provided, updated and distributed through our trusted and appropriate channels to ensure our local residents are informed.”

Councillor Poole, Deputy Leader of the Council, asked that any supplementary questions be submitted to him in writing.

43. REPORTS OF CABINET AND COMMITTEES

The Mayor reported that there were no reports to consider from the last Cabinet meeting and other committees.

44. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

(a) UK Shared Prosperity Fund Capital Spend Year 1

Council considered the report of the report of the Chief Officer for Growth and Investment (Part 1 - agenda item 7(a) concerning the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

RESOLVED THAT –

(1) the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation as set out in the report be approved;

- (2) a 2022/23 supplementary capital budget of £0.346m be established for UKSPF Capital schemes to be fully funded through the UKSPF funding be approved;
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer for Finance and Performance in consultation with the Chief Officer for Growth and Investment to make minor changes to the spend to ensure that all money is spent by the end of the financial year; and
- (4) the use of powers approved as part of the 2022/23 Capital Strategy be noted, the Chief Officer Finance and Performance may exercise authority to adjust the funding of the schemes subject the annual Capital Financing review.

(b) Property Acquisition and Disposal Policy

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive (Part 1 – agenda item 7(b)) concerning the Council’s Property Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

RESOLVED THAT – the Property Acquisition & Disposal policy 2022-2025 and accompanying approval process, as at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

(c) Appointments to Outside Bodies – Rugby First

Council considered the report of the Chief Officer – Legal and Governance (Part 1 – agenda item 7(c)) concerning the appointment of directors to Rugby First.

RESOLVED THAT – this item be deferred to the next meeting of Council.

45. NOTICES OF MOTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 11

Council considered the following Motions, notice of which had been given pursuant to Standing Order 11.

(a) Councillor Slinger moved and Councillor Moran seconded the motion as set out below.

“Rugby Borough Council and the National Landlords’ Association previously jointly ran a Private Sector Landlords’ Forum. According to the agenda of the Cabinet published on 2 September 2015, the Forum met quarterly and its aims were to: “Improve relationships between private-sector landlords and the council; provide training opportunities for landlords – particularly in terms of keeping them up to date on legislative changes that may affect them; provide an arena in which landlords, agents and the council can share information and concerns; and encourage networking amongst landlords, the council and other relevant partners.”

This motion asks the Council to reconstitute the Private Sector Landlords' Forum with its previous objectives, in order that all relevant stakeholders, including councillors, can work together in a collaborative, constructive manner. It is hoped that the proper functioning of this Forum will help stakeholders work together to undertake their respective responsibilities towards each other in full and encourage good neighbourly behaviour. It will consider issues and concerns that affect landlords, tenants and the wider community, including:

- Supply, quality and cost of rental properties;*
- Improving relations between tenants and landlords;*
- Enhancing relations between the private rented sector and the wider community;*
- Tackling anti-social behaviour that can sometimes arise from rented accommodation, such as fly-tipping, noise and lack of parking.*

This motion further proposes that alongside reconstituting the Private Sector Landlords' Forum, the Council will develop and launch a free, standalone Landlord Accreditation Scheme, whose objectives will be to improve the condition and management of the private rented sector in Rugby Borough. While membership will be voluntary, the Council would actively promote the Scheme across the Borough. The Council would publicise good behaviour and transgressions in order to ensure that the high standards of most landlords are the norm and that good property conditions are maintained."

Further to debate, Councillor Poole proposed and Councillor Ms Robbins seconded the following amendment:

"Rugby Borough Council and the National Landlords' Association previously jointly ran a Private Sector Landlords' Forum. According to the agenda of the Cabinet published on 2 September 2015, the Forum met quarterly and its aims were to: "Improve relationships between private-sector landlords and the council; provide training opportunities for landlords – particularly in terms of keeping them up to date on legislative changes that may affect them; provide an arena in which landlords, agents and the council can share information and concerns; and encourage networking amongst landlords, the council and other relevant partners."

This motion asks the Council to continue its existing work, building on the conversations which have been taking place with private landlords, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service and other stakeholders, to reconstitute the Private Sector Landlords' Forum with its previous objectives, in order that all relevant stakeholders, including councillors, can work together in a collaborative, constructive manner. It is hoped that the proper functioning of this Forum will help stakeholders work together to undertake their respective responsibilities towards each other in full and encourage good neighbourly behaviour. It will consider issues and concerns that affect landlords, tenants and the wider community, including:

- *Supply, quality and cost of rental properties;*
- *Improving relations between tenants and landlords;*
- *Enhancing relations between the private rented sector and the wider community;*
- *Tackling anti-social behaviour that can sometimes arise from rented accommodation, such as fly-tipping, noise and lack of parking.*

This motion further proposes that early consideration is given by the Forum to reviewing the existing voluntary Private Sector Housing Charter with a view to identifying options to support the improvement of the condition and management of the private rented sector in Rugby Borough. Considerations should include the introduction of a licensing scheme for all rented properties in the Borough.”

Further to debate, the Mayor put the amendment to the vote and declared it carried.

(b) Councillor Moran moved and Councillor Slinger seconded the motion as set out below.

“On 3 November 2022 The Bank of England raised its base rate to 3% from 2.25, its highest level in 14 years, in a move that is set to add an average of around £3,000 per year to mortgage bills for those households that are set to renew their mortgages. Weeks earlier the new Energy Price Guarantee tariff confirmed average energy bills at £2,500 which is 27% higher than the Summer price cap and 96% higher than the Winter 21 cap. Meanwhile, food and drink prices are increasing at their fastest pace since April 1980 rocketing by 14.6% over the year to September 2022.

The situation is unlikely to improve in the short term with the Governor of the Bank of England warning that the UK is facing its longest recession since records began and a “very challenging” time ahead. The people of Rugby are clearly not immune to this crisis and the Labour Group is very concerned that not only will the most vulnerable be dramatically impacted but that whole sections of our society will be exposed.

Like the Coronavirus pandemic an urgent collaborative, multi-agency approach is required. The work of senior officers in reporting to the Scrutiny Committee is very welcome but the matter requires greater prioritisation and a co-ordinated financial assessment such that real and necessary action can be taken in the short-term.

This Motion asks the Council to work with Warwickshire County Council and all other relevant partners to formulate an Action Plan as soon as possible that explicitly addresses the needs of its constituents when faced with this level of existential crisis. Specifically, we call upon the Council to:

- *Conduct an urgent re-appraisal of the Council’s financial situation with regards identifying the potential impact of the Financial Crisis on the Borough’s growth plans and associated budget forecasts*

- *Conduct an urgent assessment of the financial cost of addressing the needs of constituents in meeting the multi-faceted challenges of this Financial Crisis with particular regard to homelessness and also food/energy poverty*
- *Detail clearly what additional central government funding is available to the Borough going forward and, to provide context, detail what similar additional/extraordinary funding such as “Levelling Up” or similar the Borough has received since 2019*
- *Following the above analysis to produce an options appraisal setting out all of the strategic choices available to the Council to achieve its bottom-line objective of safeguarding the health and welfare of the people of Rugby.”*

Further to debate, the Mayor put the motion to the voted and declared it lost.

(c) Councillor Ms Livesey moved and Councillor Mrs Brown seconded the motion as set out below.

“The Labour Group is extremely concerned about the impact the cost-of-living crisis will have on children in Rugby. Currently, 3,414 children rely on free school meals for basic nutrition in Rugby which represents 19.2% of the school population in the town. This is the third highest rate on Warwickshire, and this number is likely to rise. Families with multiple children who pay for school meals may find it increasingly difficult to afford school meals, as the cost-of living crisis hits them. We are gravely worried about the impact this will have on children’s ability to learn, their physical health and their long-term well-being, mentally, socially and physically. The Labour group calls upon Rugby Borough Council (working with the county council and other partners where required) to:

- *ask the Director of Public Health at the county council to undertake urgent research on the expected rise in the number of children living in poverty in the borough, given that the JNSA is at least 3 years old and for the county council and RBC to make plans to meet that challenge;*
- *undertake urgent research into the number of children living in precarious housing and make plans to address housing issues and take additional steps to prevent child homelessness where necessary, avoiding the use of temporary accommodation;*
- *work with local/national organisations such as Magic Breakfast, Make Lunch, schools and other organisations nationally and locally, to help ensure that affordable and nutritious food is available for school children in Rugby;*
- *work to encourage schools that do not already have them, to host gardening clubs to grow fruit and vegetables for their school community and provide support and advice from the parks department where required; and*

- *encourage schools in Rugby to set up non-stigmatising second hand uniform sales/swaps.”*

Further to debate, Councillor Mrs Crane moved and Councillor Poole seconded the following amendment:

“The Council is extremely concerned about the impact the cost-of-living crisis will have on children in Rugby. Currently, 3,414 children rely on free school meals for basic nutrition in Rugby which represents 19.2% of the school population in the town. This is the third highest rate in Warwickshire, and this number is likely to rise. Families with multiple children who pay for school meals may find it increasingly difficult to afford school meals, as the cost-of living crisis hits them. We are gravely worried about the impact this will have on children’s ability to learn, their physical health and their long-term well-being, mentally, socially and physically.

The Council:

- *asks the Warwickshire Health and Wellbeing Board – how in the context of the cost of living crisis they will be meeting their priority to ‘help children and young people to have the best start in life’ and for this to be presented to the Rugby Health and Wellbeing Partnership and the Scrutiny Committee.*

Furthermore, the Council asks officers to present to Scrutiny Committee an update on the work which is already taking place in relation to Area Action Plans and how they will seek to;

- *understand the number of families living in financial hardship, where children are at potential risk of homelessness; work with local/national organisations such as Magic Breakfast, Make Lunch, schools and other organisations nationally and locally, to help ensure that affordable and nutritious food is available for school children in Rugby;*
- *work to encourage schools that do not already have them, to host gardening clubs to grow fruit and vegetables for their school community and provide support and advice from the parks department where required; and*
- *encourage schools in Rugby to set up non-stigmatising second hand uniform sales/swaps, recognising both the environmental and financial benefits of such schemes.*
- *Apply this learning in other areas of the Borough.”*

Further to debate, the Mayor put the amendment to the vote and declared it carried.

(d) Councillor Sandison moved and Councillor Roodhouse seconded the motion as set out below.

“This Council recognises the enormous social and environmental value of our public open spaces especially our parks and recreation grounds. We have seen anti-social behavior, criminal damage, drug taking, alcohol abuse and graffiti this spoils these areas for residents.

We recognise the work this Council has already done but believe we can go further. Some Councils have introduced Park Watch Schemes engaging local residents, dog walkers and those exercising in our parks and recreation grounds to be vigilant of any untoward activity and report it to their local authority either by email, social media or telephone. This intelligence led approach then enables environmental protection officers and the police to target limited resources in a constructive manner to reduce such incidents whilst re-assuring the public that they can continue to use their local open spaces for peaceful and pleasant pursuits.

Council requests that the relevant officers bring forward proposals of developing a network of volunteers that can support the Council in protecting its green spaces along with a hotline system that could be used to aid communication and reporting of such incidents and where appropriate put forward recommendations for targeted public space protection orders in high incident locations.”

Further to debate, the Mayor put the motion to the vote and declared it carried.

46. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

47. 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.

48. 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 involve the likely disclosure of information defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

49. PRIVATE REPORTS OF OFFICERS

(a) Environmental Health and Community Safety Restructure Amendment

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer for Regulation and Safety (Part 2 – agenda item 1(a)) concerning an amendment to the restructure for the Environmental Health and Community Safety team.

RESOLVED THAT - the proposed amended structure for the Environmental Health and Community Safety Teams, as at Appendix 1 and 2 to the report, be approved.

(b) Capital Programme 2022/23 – Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Centre and Section 106 Funding

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer for Leisure and Wellbeing (Part 2 – agenda item 1(b)) concerning funding for proposed works at the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Centre.

RESOLVED THAT –

- (1) a budget of £0.420m, to be added to the 2022/23 capital programme for the enhancement of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Leisure Centre, to be fully funded from Section 106 funding, be approved; and
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer for Leisure and Wellbeing for the agreement of contract variation related to soft play facility profit share arrangement.

(c) Allocation of insurance monies

Council considered the private report of the Chief Executive (Part 2 – agenda item 1(c)) concerning the allocation of insurance monies received by the Council.

RESOLVED THAT – the recommendation, as detailed in the report, be approved.

(d) Extension of recycling contract

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Operations and Traded Services (Part 2 – agenda item 1(d)) concerning the proposed extension of the Council’s recycling contract.

RESOLVED THAT – the extension of the recycling contract, as detailed in the report, be approved.

(e) Urgent Decision under Delegated Powers – Property Repairs Service relocation to the Town Hall

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Operations and Traded Services (Part 2 – agenda item 1(e)) concerning an urgent decision taken under delegated powers with regard to the relocation of the Property Repairs service to the Town Hall.

RESOLVED THAT – the report be noted.

MAYOR