

COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING Wednesday 14th October 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Sheerin (the Mayor in the Chair); Councillors Ali Ahmed, Iftikhar Ahmed, Shakil Ahmed, Daalat Ali, Sultan Ali, Bamford, Besford, Blundell, Boriss, Brett, Burke, Dale, Davidson, Dearnley, Dutton, Neil Emmott, Susan Emmott, Emsley, Gartside, Hartley, Heakin, Holly, Hussain, Joinson, Kelly, Malcolm, Martin, Massey, Meredith, Mir, Nolan, O'Neill, O'Rourke, Paolucci, Rana, Rashid, Robinson, Rowbotham, Rush, Angela Smith, Susan Smith, Sullivan, Taylor, Wardle, Warne, Wazir, West, Donna Williams, Peter Williams, Winkler, Wraighte, Zaheer and Zaman

OFFICERS: S. Rumbelow (Chief Executive), G. Hopper (Director of Children's Services), D. Wilcock (Assistant Director – Legal, Governance and Workforce/Monitoring Officer), M. Garraway, A. James, N. Suleman and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate)

14 **MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Mayor reminded the Council of the recent death of former Mayor and Freeman of the Borough Alan Whitehead who passed in July 2020. Members of the Council observed a period of silence in honour of his memory.

15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

16 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Beswick, Councillor Cocks, Councillor Farnell, Councillor Hornby, Councillor McCarthy and Councillor Nickson

17 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings of Council held 15th July and 2nd September 2020 be approved and signed by the Mayor as correct records.

18 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

There were no submitted questions or petitions.

19 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

Birth Unit

- a. It was **moved** by Councillor Rana and **seconded** by Councillor Zaheer that:

"This Council warmly congratulates the Pennine Acute Trust for listening to local residents and agreeing to set up a birthing centre at the Rochdale Infirmary.

The Council further congratulates the Friends of Rochdale Maternity Care for leading the campaign to return maternity services to the borough.

The midwife-led birthing centre is expected to open soon and will be important facility for expectant mothers who do not have the space or privacy for a home birth.

The Council supports continued investment in NHS maternity services to provide the most expert and safest care for mothers and babies during childbirth. However it also recognises the need to provide local facilities for uncomplicated births for those mothers who would like to give birth at home but are unable to do so.”

On being put the vote, the motion was carried and it was **RESOLVED** accordingly.

Recover, Retrain, Rebuild

b. It was **moved** by Councillor O'Rourke and **seconded** by Councillor Burke that:

“This Council notes the scheme announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 24/09/2020 whereby the Job Retention Scheme in place since March 2020 and October 2020, where the Government covered 80% of wages if workers could not work due to Covid-19 will cease, and a new scheme where 22% of wages will be covered as long as at least one third of normal hours are worked.

The Council believes that while the Job Retention Scheme was a historic investment of taxpayers' money to avert widespread job losses, this massive, unprecedented investment will, essentially, go to waste as millions of people, including thousands in the Borough of Rochdale, who have suffered throughout the Covid-19 crisis, now face the very real prospect of unemployment as their jobs are not viable to return to at this moment in time under Covid-19.

This Council believes that we need a strategy that focuses on recovering jobs, retraining workers and rebuilding our country. This strategy must involve:

- 1) A job Recovery Scheme that allows staff to work reduced hours, with the Government subsidising a proportion of wages for the rest of the week. The scheme should be designed to reward companies who bring back more workers part-time, rather than bringing some back full-time and letting others go.
- 2) A nationwide Retraining Strategy for the unemployed and those facing unemployment. This strategy must help those whose hours have been cut to increase their skills to retrain, and enable people who have lost jobs to transition into new work.
- 3) A business Rebuilding Scheme which must give businesses, who have taken advantage of Government loan schemes, the confidence and security that they will be able to continue operating past March 2021, or else a whole new set of

businesses and workers may well be pushed back underneath then. The Council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to revisit their scheme, work with business and trade unions and create one that will help our towns, borough and country recover, retrain and rebuild.”

On being put the vote, the motion was carried and it was **RESOLVED** accordingly.

Council Contacts

c. It was **moved** by Councillor Howard and **seconded** by Councillor Paolucci that:

“That the Council introduce a facility to offer all residents wishing to access the Council's services, the option of doing so by more traditional means, namely via the postal service and the telephone, alongside web access and e-mail links. This would also be included in all of the authority's marketing materials thereby ensuring that no one in the Borough is excluded from accessing Council services, especially the elderly and vulnerable, whose access to and understanding of the Internet may be more limited.”

On being put the vote, the Motion was carried and it was **RESOLVED** accordingly.

20 NON-ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Council was requested to consider and authorise an absence from attendance at meetings in accordance with S85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Council was advised that where a member is unable to attend any meeting of the authority for a period of six consecutive months following the date of their last attendance, they automatically cease to be a member of the authority, unless Council has resolved to approve a reason for an extended absence.

Resolved:

That having regard to the circumstances of the absence of Councillors Farnell and Hornby from Council meetings, Council agrees to waive the requirements of Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, within the Municipal Year, or until as such time as the Council is able to hold meetings in person, suitable equipment is sourced for the Members, or the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 revoked.

21 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

The Council considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/2020.

Resolved:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/2020 be noted.

- 22 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**
The Council considered the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2019/2020.

Resolved:

That the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2019/2020 be noted.

23 SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS

The Council received a report which detailed executive decisions taken under special urgency provision, by the Chief Executive between February and October 2020.

The Chief Executive had taken special urgent decisions, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, in consultation with Portfolio Holders and the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair. Decisions taken during this period were as a result of the limitations for Cabinet and other bodies to meet due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

24 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

The Council was informed that the Authority's Monitoring Officer would be retiring at the end of December 2020. The Council was required to appoint an appropriate Officer to discharge the statutory functions associated with the position of Monitoring Officer, pursuant to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. A recruitment process to identify a successor had taken place during September and October 2020 and a preferred candidate was identified.

Resolved:

That Mr. Asif Ibrahim be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer, in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, with effect from 1st January 2021.