

COUNCIL

Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 29th July, 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Arnie Hankin in the Chair;

Councillors John Baird, Chris Baron, Kier Barsby, Jamie Bell, Jim Blagden, Will Bostock, Christian Chapman, Melanie Darrington, Samantha Deakin, Andy Gascoyne, Andrew Harding, David Hennigan, Tom Hollis, Trevor Locke, Sarah Madigan, David Martin, Andy Meakin, Lauren Mitchell, Keir Morrison, Warren Nuttall, Matthew Relf, Kevin Rostance, Phil Rostance, Dave Shaw, John Smallridge, Helen-Ann Smith, David Walters, Lee Waters, Caroline Wilkinson, Daniel Williamson, John Wilmott and Jason Zadrozny.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Dale Grounds and Rachel Madden.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Carol Cooper-Smith, Ruth Dennis, Katherine Green, Theresa Hodgkinson, Peter Hudson, Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

C.15 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

Theresa Hodgkinson declared an interest in agenda item 7b (Appointment of the Chief Executive and Head of the Paid Service) and advised that she would be leaving the room whilst the item of business was voted upon.

C.16 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 4 March and 20 May 2021, as now submitted, be received and approved.

C.17 Announcements from the Chairman, Leader, Members of the Cabinet and the Head of Paid Service

No announcements were made.

C.18 Questions from the Public

No questions were received for consideration.

C.19 Petitions

No petitions were submitted for consideration.

C.20 Report on Urgent Key Decisions

The Leader of the Council advised as follows:-

“In accordance with Rule 17.2 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules it is necessary for me to inform the Council when an executive decision has been taken pursuant to Rule 16 (Special Urgency Provisions.)

I can confirm to the Council that four such decisions have been taken as a matter of urgency since the last Council meeting in December 2020:

- *Leasing of Brook Street Offices, Sutton in Ashfield*
- *Carbon Saving Works to Council Assets – Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Phase 2)*
- *Green Homes Grant Phase 2*
- *Letting of Commercial Property - Grangemouth*

The decisions were key and two contained exempt information but the full 28 days’ notice could not be given due to the need to proceed with the transactions without delay.

The Rule 16 Notice and the non-exempt elements of the decisions have been duly published.”

C.21 Appointment of the Chief Executive and Head of the Paid Service

Council was requested to consider the appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30.1, Councillor Jason Zadrozny moved suspension of Council Procedure Rule 16.4, in relation to the "Content and Length of Speeches", to enable him to deliver a farewell speech to the outgoing Interim Chief Executive, Carol Cooper-Smith. Having been seconded by Councillor Samantha Deakin, the motion was duly carried.)

Theresa Hodgkinson took the opportunity to express her thanks and gratitude to Carol Cooper-Smith for her commitment and exemplary service to Ashfield District Council, as Interim Chief Executive, over the past couple of years.

The Leader of the Council then delivered a farewell speech to Carol and presented her with some gifts from the Ashfield Independent Group. Many other Members also reiterated their appreciation and offered their best wishes for the future.

(At this point in the proceedings, Theresa Hodgkinson left the room whilst the vote was cast in relation to the Chief Executive appointment.)

RESOLVED

that the Council appoints Theresa Hodgkinson to the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service with effect from 1 August 2021.

To conclude, Theresa Hodgkinson, as the new Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, thanked Members for their votes and pledged her commitment to the Council, Members and the residents of Ashfield whilst looking forward to working with all concerned in the future.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30, it was moved by Councillor Jason Zadrozny and seconded by Councillor Samantha Deakin that Procedure Rules 10 (Duration of Meeting) and 23 (Conclusion of Proceedings) be suspended, for the duration of the meeting, to enable all matters on the agenda to be satisfactorily concluded. Having been put to the vote, the Council agreed with this course of action.)

C.22 Annual Scrutiny Report 2021

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Andrew Harding, presented the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2021 with contributions from Councillors Dave Shaw, Christian Chapman and Jim Blagden as Chairmen of the three appointed Scrutiny Panels.

RESOLVED

that the work undertaken by scrutiny from 2019 to 2021 as detailed within the Annual Scrutiny Report 2021, as presented, be received and noted.

C.23 Proposed Capital Programme Addition 2021/22

Approval was sought from Council to add a £3m budget to the Capital Programme to facilitate the timely acquisition of in-District properties to support the regeneration of the District.

RESOLVED

that approval be given for the addition of a £3m budget to the General Fund Capital Programme for the potential acquisition of in-District properties for regeneration purposes.

C.24 Interim Review of Polling Places

Council was presented with proposals to carry out an interim review of polling places to consider issues highlighted during the elections in May 2021.

RESOLVED that

- a) the establishment of a Polling Places Review Working Party, be approved with a remit as outlined in the report and with the full scope being developed at the first meeting of this Working Party;
- b) it be agreed that the Working Party consists of 6 Members: 4 Ashfield Independents Members, 1 Conservative Member and 1 Labour Member;
- c) the membership of the Working Party to be as follows:

Samantha Deakin
Tom Hollis
Lauren Mitchell
Kevin Rostance
Helen-Ann Smith
Jason Zadrozny;
- d) the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jason Zadrozny, be appointed as Chairman of the Working Party;
- e) the timetable to complete the review, as outlined in the report, be approved.

C.25 Boundary Commission for England Proposals for Parliamentary Boundaries

Council was provided with an overview of the Boundary Commission for England proposals for Parliamentary Boundaries and the consultation stage currently underway.

Two plans were circulated to Members outlining proposals for an initial response from the Council.

During the discussion Councillors Chris Baron, Lauren Mitchell and Keir Morrison stated that they did not want their names being included with any formal response from the Council in respect of the parliamentary boundary proposals and wished this to be noted in the minutes.

In addition, and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 18.4 [Recorded Vote], Councillor Lauren Mitchell moved that the vote in relation to this item be formally recorded in the minutes. Having been duly seconded by Councillor Keir Morrison and put to the vote, Members agreed to this course of action.)

RESOLVED that

- a) the Boundary Commission for England proposals for Parliamentary Boundaries and the consultation stage currently underway, be received and noted;

- b) it be agreed that the Council makes a formal representation to the Boundary Commission for England, as part of the consultation stage, based on the suggested alternative boundaries detailed within the report and the two plans further circulated at the meeting.

<u>Voting Results</u>			
Councillor:		Councillor:	
John Baird	For	David Martin	For
Chris Baron	For	Andy Meakin	For
Kier Barsby	For	Lauren Mitchell	Against
Jamie Bell	For	Keir Morrison	Against
Jim Blagden	Against	Warren Nuttall	For
Will Bostock	For	Matthew Relf	For
Christian Chapman	For	Kevin Rostance	Against
Melanie Darrington	Against	Phil Rostance	Against
Samantha Deakin	For	Dave Shaw	Against
Andy Gascoyne	For	John Smallridge	For
Dale Grounds	<i>Absent</i>	Helen-Ann Smith	For
Arnie Hankin	For	David Walters	For
Andrew Harding	For	Lee Waters	Against
David Hennigan	For	Caroline Wilkinson	For
Tom Hollis	For	Daniel Williamson	For
Trevor Locke	Against	John Wilmott	Against
Rachel Madden	<i>Absent</i>	Jason Zadrozny	For
Sarah Madigan	For		

C.26 Recommendations from the Cabinet and the Council's Committees

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rule 2(ix), Council considered the following recommendations:-

Minute No. CA.12
Cabinet – 19 July 2021
Draft Outturn Report 2021

RESOLVED

that approval be given to carry-forward the £5.455m underspend on the Capital Programme to 2021/22, due to slippage (delays to schemes) included in the Programme and as outlined in Section 4 of the Cabinet report.

Minute No. CA.13
Cabinet – 19 July 2021
Addition to Capital Programme - S106 Funding

RESOLVED

approval be given to the additions to the Capital Programme of a number of green space improvement projects, funded through Section 106 public open space contributions and as outlined in the Cabinet report.

The meeting was adjourned at 9.16pm and reconvened at 9.30pm.

(During the adjournment, Councillors Chris Baron and Melanie Darrington left the meeting at 9.18pm.)

C.27 Updates from Members of the Cabinet on their Portfolio Activity

Councillor Samantha Deakin - Portfolio Holder for Parks, Town Centres and Neighbourhood Services

- Officers have been busy administering the Welcome Back Fund and the Senior Covid Information Officer is with the Council until the end of September
- The organisation of events is well underway with a planned Food Festival and Tabletop Sales.
- Footfall is increasing at all town centres with Kirkby making a slow start but increasing steadily
- Projects continue with £550k being spent on the Council's parks and open spaces and a further £500k investment imminent
- Replanting of 1000 trees
- The success of the 2021 Spring Clean, Bag It and Flying Skip Campaigns and a thank you to all staff involved
- New proposals for the Big Spring Clean 2022
- Recent works being carried out at Kings Mill Reservoir by a Youth Voluntary Charity
- The installation of a rapid electric charger at the Depot and plans to replace the diesel fleet with new hybrid vehicles.

Councillor Matthew Relf – Portfolio Holder for Place, Planning and Regeneration

- Work well underway to purchase vacant High Street properties as part of the Towns Fund programme
- The imminent opening of the new Moor Market at Kirkby in Ashfield
- Proposals for walking and cycling improvements within Ashfield
- Creation of a Centre of Excellence for disabled people in Sport and Theatre, at Portland College

- The recent award of £62.6 million for investment in Kirkby and Sutton Town Centre with 17 projects being included in the business plan
- Members' meeting arranged to discuss further ideas for Towns Fund investment
- The Discover Ashfield Board continued to meet monthly with the Graduate Officer doing an excellent job supporting the Members
- Work continuing on the Railways Bid for the Maid Marion Line.

Councillor Daniel Williamson - Portfolio Holder for Customer Services, Corporate Change and Digital Transformation

- The Risk and Emergency Planning Team continued to work hard to keep the Council safe following relaxation of the Covid distancing rules
- Improvements continued to be made to the Council's online payment facilities with the provision of a user-friendly website
- 60,000 online payments made in 2020/21 which showed a 16% increase on the previous year resulting in a 23% reduction in pay point and post office transactions
- Digital transformation was continuing with the Office 365 rollout to employees and installation of a new telephone system resulting in a £37,000 saving
- Work was now focussing on improvements to the Central Customer Portal.

Councillor Kier Barsby - Portfolio Holder for Environmental Improvements, Corporate Communications and Cross Portfolio Support

- Democratic Services and Scrutiny were now back to normal and facilitating face to face meetings with their Mod.Gov office software being upgraded and shifted to a cloud-based system
- Members were due to have their iPads updated to facilitate the new improvements
- The Legal Team were busy with Community Safety enforcement work and Freedom of Information requests were still being processed at a high level
- Elections were currently delivering the 2021 annual canvass and were making preparations for the imminent Polling Places review
- The Communications Team continued to keep the District informed with 97 press releases being sent out and support continuing for the roll out of Covid vaccinations.

Councillor John Wilmott - Portfolio Holder for Licensing, Environmental Health and Regulatory Services

- The Licensing Team were currently facilitating a 28 day consultation for amendment to taxi fees and charges
- Licensing applications continued to increase and digital upgrades were underway to enable applications for licences to be completed online
- The Environmental Health Team were busy dealing with 2,346 requests from members of the public and local businesses and 163 food premises registrations had been completed
- There had been a recent increase in illegal encampments within the District
- A Selective Licensing review was due to be undertaken within the next few months.

Councillor Helen-Ann Smith - Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Crime Reduction

- Enforcement action continued at pace with a 6% overall reduction in crime within the District
- Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) were now being issued daily
- The success of the recent Operation Springboard in conjunction with the Police
- £550K to be invested in 'Safer Streets'
- Community safety training within schools was developing and healthy relationships were being formed.

Councillor Jason Zadrozny – Leader of the Council

- Reopening of Leisure Centres in April 2021
- Proposed capital improvements to the Lammas and Hucknall Leisure Centres
- Progress in relation to the Kirkby Leisure Centre build by Keir Contractors and their arranged activity days and community events including local school visits to site and learn to brick lay days
- Progress regarding the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- The Council's gold award achievement for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme
- Additional funding for the 'Feelgood Families' Scheme of £10,000

- Open Air Cinema events.

C.28 Notice of Motion 1

The Council received a notice of motion moved by Councillor Keir Morrison and seconded by Councillor Lauren Mitchell as follows:-

“On the 29th of April 2021 the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee published their investigation into the surplus sharing arrangements between the UK Government and the Mineworkers Pension Scheme.

Since privatisation of the Mineworkers’ Pension Scheme in 1994, the Government has received 50% of surpluses in the Scheme’s value, in return for providing a guarantee that the value of pensions will not decrease. At the time it was expected that the Government would receive approximately £4bn from the arrangement in today’s money. However, to date, the Government has received £4.4bn, and is also due to receive at least another £1.9bn, on top of 50% off any future surpluses. The Government has not paid any funds into the Scheme in return. The Government failed to conduct due diligence during the 1994 negotiations and was negligent by not taking actuarial advice. There was no empirical analysis or evaluation to inform or support the 50:50 split, and it therefore remains arbitrary.

Tens of thousands of former mineworkers and their families reside within our district. Ashfield District Council support their calls for the Government to take seriously and act on the following findings of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee:

- *The Government should relinquish its entitlement to the Investment Reserve and transfer the £1.2bn fund to the Mineworkers’ Pension Fund.*
- *The Governments should not be in the business of profiting from mineworkers’ pensions. We are therefore disappointed by the Government’s argument that the 1994 agreement is a success because the public purse has had strong returns from it. The Government is not a corporate entity driven by profit-motives and should not view the miners’ pensions as an opportunity to derive income.*
- *The Government’s entitlement to 50% of surpluses is not proportionate to the degree of financial risk it actually faces and therefore should not take any further surpluses out of the scheme until such a time that the Government has supported losses to the scheme equalling that that they have already taken out of the scheme.*
- *The Government has potentially accrued £6.3bn from the Mineworker’s Pension Scheme and should use this windfall to cover any future losses to the scheme. In supporting these findings Ashfield District Council will write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking him to act immediately to the findings of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and implement their recommendations.”*

Councillor David Hennigan moved an amendment to the motion (shown in italics), seconded by Councillor John Baird as follows:-

"Ashfield District Council notes the historical contribution that mining has played across Ashfield.

Annesley, Bentinck, Bottom Pit, Hucknall, Top Pit Hucknall, Summit, Linby, Newstead, Silverhill and Sutton and other local collieries played a pivotal part in shaping the Ashfield District.

Nottinghamshire was a major supplier of coal for industry and home consumption, particularly during the 19th and 20th century. At one time, Nottinghamshire, with 40,000 miners was one of the most successful coalfields in Europe.

On the 29th of April 2021 the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee published their investigation into the surplus sharing arrangements between the UK Government and the Mineworkers Pension Scheme.

Since privatisation of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme in 1994, the Government has received 50% of surpluses in the Scheme's value, in return for providing a guarantee that the value of pensions will not decrease. At the time it was expected that the Government would receive approximately £4bn from the arrangement in today's money. However, to date, the Government has received £4.4bn, and is also due to receive at least another £1.9bn, on top of 50% off any future surpluses. The Government has not paid any funds into the Scheme in return. The Government failed to conduct due diligence during the 1994 negotiations and was negligent by not taking actuarial advice. There was no empirical analysis or evaluation to inform or support the 50:50 split, and it therefore remains arbitrary.

Tens of thousands of former mineworkers and their families reside within our district. Ashfield District Council support their calls for the Government to take seriously and act on the following findings of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee:

- The Government should relinquish its entitlement to the Investment Reserve and transfer the £1.2bn fund to the Mineworkers' Pension Fund.
- The Governments should not be in the business of profiting from mineworkers' pensions. We are therefore disappointed by the Government's argument that the 1994 agreement is a success because the public purse has had strong returns from it. The Government is not a corporate entity driven by profit-motives and should not view the miners' pensions as an opportunity to derive income.
- The Government's entitlement to 50% of surpluses is not proportionate to the degree of financial risk it actually faces and therefore should not take any further surpluses out of the scheme until such a time that the Government has supported losses to the scheme equalling that that they have already taken out of the scheme.

- The Government has potentially accrued £6.3bn from the Mineworker's Pension Scheme and should use this windfall to cover any future losses to the scheme. ~~*In supporting these findings Ashfield District Council will write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking him to act immediately to the findings of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and implement their recommendations.*~~

We therefore ask for a letter to be sent from the 3 party leaders on Ashfield District Council on behalf of all councillors to all Nottinghamshire's Members of Parliament and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer – The Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak MP stating that Ashfield District Council believes that:

- 1. The Government should implement immediately the full findings and conclusions of the BEIS Select Committee's investigation into the Mineworker's Pension Scheme.*
- 2. That Government should not be in the business of making money from the Mineworker's Pension Scheme and should now hand back the £1.2 billion from the investment reserve fund to the miners and their families.*
- 3. That Government should now seek to negotiate a fairer arrangement to benefit the miners and should not be seen to profiteering and should only take money from the scheme if it falls into deficit and then only at 50%."*

Councillors Keir Morrison and Lauren Mitchell (as the mover and seconder of the motion) having considered the amendment, duly agreed to its inclusion in the motion.

Having been fully considered, the amended motion was put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED

that a letter be sent from the 3 party leaders of Ashfield District Council, on behalf of all Councillors, to all Nottinghamshire's Members of Parliament and to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, The Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak MP stating that Ashfield District Council believes that:

- a) the Government should implement immediately the full findings and conclusions of the BEIS Select Committee's investigation into the Mineworker's Pension Scheme.
- b) that Government should not be in the business of making money from the Mineworker's Pension Scheme and should now hand back the £1.2 billion from the investment reserve fund to the miners and their families.
- c) that Government should now seek to negotiate a fairer arrangement to benefit the miners and should not be seen to profiteering and should only take money from the scheme if it falls into deficit and then only at 50%.

C.29 Notice of Motion 2

The Council received a notice of motion moved by Councillor David Martin and seconded by Councillor Helen-Ann Smith as follows:-

"Ashfield District Council notes that the Government is currently consulting on increasing the free prescription age to 66 and that of thousands of residents in Nottinghamshire aged 60-65 will be adversely impacted.

This Council further notes that residents aged between 60 and 65 receive free prescriptions when they turn 60 in England, whereas the State Pension Age is now 66.

This Council also notes the comments made by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) who said it was "deeply concerned" by the plan - and warned it could leave people without the important medications that they need.

This Council acknowledges that according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies - among older workers, 37% reported that their household income was now lower because of the impact of successive coronavirus lockdowns. These are the very residents who will be impacted if the age for free prescriptions is raised.

This Council therefore resolves to write a formal submission to the consultation opposing any plans to raise to free prescription age to 66. This Council further resolves to send a letter to Secretary of State for Health and Social Care - The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP from the leaders of Ashfield District Council formally opposing these plans on behalf of all councillors."

Having been fully considered, the motion was put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED that

- a) the Council writes a formal submission to the consultation opposing any plans to raise the free prescription age to 66;
- b) a letter be sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, from the Leaders of Ashfield District Council formally opposing these plans on behalf of all Councillors.

C.30 Notice of Motion 3

The Council received a notice of motion moved by Councillor Matthew Relf and seconded by Councillor David Shaw as follows:-

"Ashfield District Council notes the Government's White Paper 'Planning for the Future: planning policy changes in England in 2020 and future reforms'

This Council believes that proposals made in this Planning Bill would make the biggest changes to the planning in decades, to increase the speed with which developers can start building on land but at the expense of valuable local scrutiny and would substantially repeal safeguards in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.

The legislation was outlined at the Queen's Speech in May, with detailed plans expected to be published later this year.

Much of the rhetoric from the government surrounding these proposed changes has painted the current planning system as a blocker to progress. This council does not recognise this depiction of the planning system. This council believes that while improvements can always be found, the current planning system does well at balancing the requirement for new developments with the need for those new developments to not detrimentally impact existing residents.

This Council believes the outlined proposals set out in the White Paper would:

- Curtail the ability of Ashfield residents to comment on individual applications.*
- Lead to a planning 'free for all' with developers able to prioritise profit above all other concerns.*
- Remove the power of local councillors to make planning decisions on behalf of the residents who elected them.*
- Abandon section 106 and community infrastructure levy payments and replace them with a national levy that will favour affluent areas of the UK and leave places like Ashfield further behind.*
- Remove the statutory requirement for local authorities to publish planning notices in local newspapers – thus eroding transparency.*
- Offers nothing to deal with the affordable housing crisis.*
- Would increase the housing targets for Nottinghamshire by 48%.*

Our Council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape the District of Ashfield and deliver necessary new homes. We therefore call on the Government to protect the right of residents, communities and councillors to object to individual planning applications.

That the Leader of Ashfield District Council writes to the MPs for Ashfield and Sherwood – Lee Anderson and Mark Spencer on behalf of all councillors asking for a commitment to voting against this bill when it comes before the House, to issue a public statement opposing the bill and for a guarantee that they will use any influence they have to persuade their colleagues in the House of Commons to do the same.”

Having been fully considered, the motion was put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED

that the Leader of Ashfield District Council writes to the MPs for Ashfield and Sherwood, Lee Anderson and Mark Spencer, on behalf of all councillors asking for a commitment to voting against this bill when it comes before the House, to issue a public statement opposing the bill and for a guarantee that they will use any influence they have to persuade their colleagues in the House of Commons to do the same.

C.31 Notice of Motion 4

The Council received a notice of motion moved by Councillor Samantha Deakin and seconded by Councillor Jason Zadrozny as follows:-

"This Council notes the catastrophic problems caused by Severn Trent Water for residents in Kirkby-in-Ashfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield. Thousands of residents were left without water on Sunday 18 July, Monday 19 July and Tuesday 20 July this year. These were the hottest days of the year with temperatures reaching 91.4 degrees Fahrenheit in parts of Kirkby and Sutton.

This Council recognises that this is the second time in just 15 months that thousands of residents in the Ashfield District have been left without water.

This Council believes that lives were put in danger by the failures of Severn Trent Water and thanks residents including councillors for helping with the relief effort – delivering water to the elderly, young families, those isolating and other vulnerable residents.

This Council further notes the monopoly that Severn Trent have on providing water services to domestic households in the Ashfield District and calls on the Government to review this.

This Council therefore agrees to write to the Chief Executive of Severn Trent Water asking for a full investigation that is published online, for an assurance that Severn Trent Water will take all appropriate action to ensure that this never happens again, for a review of emergency processes for residents whose water supply fails and invites her to the next State of Ashfield debate to answer questions from members and local residents about the continual failure of Severn Trent Ltd."

Having been fully considered, the motion was put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED

that the Council agrees to write to the Chief Executive of Severn Trent Water asking for a full investigation that is published online, for an assurance that Severn Trent Water will take all appropriate action to ensure that this never happens again, for a review of emergency processes for residents whose water supply fails and to invite her to the next State of Ashfield debate to answer questions from Members and local residents about the continual failure of Severn Trent Ltd.

C.32 Questions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13

Question from Councillor Keir Morrison to the Leader of the Council:

"Will ADC formally recognise the change petition that's been signed by almost 6,000 Ashfield residents (at 13/7/21) to retract Hucknall Sports FC's eviction notice from the Papplewick Green playing fields, in line with the council's petition scheme policy?"

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Jason Zadrozny, responded and advised that Ashfield District Council did not accept Change.org petitions as it did not comply with the Council's approved Petition Scheme requirements. Petitions submitted through Change.org provided no evidence that people signing the petition lived, worked or studied in Ashfield. The e-Petitions submitted through the Council's website required a name, address and email address of those signing the petition.

The Council reviewed its petition scheme in February last year to provide reassurance regarding the validity of petitions and ensuring that those petitions being considered were done so by the Council with the reassurance that they were the views of Ashfield constituents and not of those people who did not live, work or study in Ashfield. Change.org did not provide this reassurance.

The Scheme was very clear that only e-Petitions submitted through the Council's website would be considered and the Council's e-Petition function was readily available through the Council's website and was easy to use.

However, there was also an additional point to consider regarding the fact that the Council would not consider petitions that were factually inaccurate. An eviction notice was never handed to Hucknall Sports and as people would have seen in the press, Hucknall Sports confirmed that they had been offered not only their preferred times and site of Papplewick Green but sites at the Merlin pitch and Titchfield Park as well which they had decided to take up. They opted themselves not to take the Papplewick Green site which was the cause of the original issue.

The Leader went on to state that he was personally willing to accept the petition to ascertain if there was a way of contacting back the people who raised concerns and to try to allay their fears. The primary aim of everything the Council does was simply getting people playing sports including football and particularly for young people and for disabled youngsters.

Councillor Morrison would recognise that events had taken place since he submitted the question and that Hucknall Sports had submitted their own statements which reiterated this.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.5, Councillor Morrison was invited to ask a supplementary question as follows:

"The Leader is quite right that events have developed since submitting the question although I have got a supplementary question that I hope he can answer.

Given that Hucknall Sports have appeared to concede in leaving Papplewick Green playing field, can the Leader explain when the lease agreement was made with Sports Gateway, by whom and why no consultation with the Club or due diligence was carried out beforehand?"

The Leader responded again by stating that there wasn't a lease agreement that had been signed and he had recently met with Sports Gateway and Hucknall Sports and various senior officers where this was again confirmed.

It was hoped that when a lease agreement was signed it would be for a long term period and offered on the open market. Conversations had been held with Hucknall Sports as to how they would bid for this (amongst others) and it is anticipated that this would be in the next 12 months after the current football season had concluded.

He hoped that the answer had clarified things for Councillor Morrison but if not, he was happy for Theresa Hodgkinson to speak to him regarding the actual timeline of events rather than the misinformation that had been circulating for some time.

Hucknall Sports were advised that once the bidding process began for the lease, the process would be open and transparent and many other clubs and interested parties would be invited to bid as many had already indicated that they would like to use the site.

The Leader reiterated the fact that he had been disappointed with the 'machismo' and egos that had surfaced during these meetings (with no clubs being faultless in this matter) and it was imperative that all the clubs worked together in the future to ensure as many people as possible were utilising the pitches and playing sports.

Sport was not just about the next famous athlete, it was about improving health, camaraderie, community and wellbeing for all residents of Ashfield. The Council had also made it clear that unless the clubs were prepared to work together as part of a community, the Council would not wish to work with them.

Council officers had been given permission to share details of the discussions so far, in relation to this matter, with any Member that were interested as the Council had nothing to hide and it would ensure that everyone had the facts rather than misinformation and untruths.

It was believed that negotiations would start up again once the current sports seasons were over and the long-term aim of the Council was to ensure that all available pitches were used as much as possible to allow people of all ages to engage with sport and improve their wellbeing.

C.33 Questions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.2 - In relation to Cabinet and Committee Meeting Minutes published since the last ordinary meeting of the Council

There were no questions submitted by Members.

The meeting closed at 11.44 am

Chairman.