

COUNCIL (STATE OF ASHFIELD DEBATE)

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

on Thursday, 8th December, 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor David Walters, in the Chair;

Councillors Samantha Deakin, Andrew Harding, Tom Hollis, Trevor Locke, Rachel Madden, Sarah Madigan, David Martin, Andy Meakin, Warren Nuttall, Nicholas Parvin, Matthew Relf, Dave Shaw, John Smallridge, Helen-Ann Smith, Lee Waters, John Wilmott and Jason Zadrozny.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors John Baird, Chris Baron, Kier Barsby, Jamie Bell, Will Bostock, Christian Chapman, Andy Gascoyne, Dale Grounds, Arnie Hankin, David Hennigan, Lauren Mitchell, Keir Morrison, Caroline Wilkinson and Daniel Williamson.

Officers Present: Craig Bonar, Lynn Cain, Ruth Dennis, Joanne Froggatt, Theresa Hodgkinson, Mike Joy, Chris Stephenson, Gillian Welch and Shane Wright.

Aspiring Leadership Group

Helen Adair, Sam Beal, Wayne Bennett, Alison Cooper and Lindsey Kenworthy.

In Attendance: Kathryn Stacey and Janis Abraham (Citizens' Advice Ashfield)
Angie Peppard and Matt Pike (Our Centre)
Trevor Clay and Yvonne Campbell (Under One Roof Community Resource Centre)
Diane Carter, Katie Jordan and Paula Longden (Mid Nottinghamshire Place Based Partnership)
Dave Williams (Department for Work and Pensions)
Teresa Jackson (Ashfield Voluntary Action).

C.55 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

(Councillors Rachel Madden, Sarah Madigan and David Martin entered the meeting at 7.08pm).

C.56 State of Ashfield Debate - Cost of Living Crisis

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and advised that he had called the meeting, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19 and following consultation with the Leader of the Council, to enable an annual State of Ashfield debate to take place.

The Chairman explained to Members that the main purpose of the meeting was to enable the Leader and his Cabinet colleagues to gather information on the issues and matters which were of concern to Members and which could be considered as part of the preparations for business planning and the proposals for the Council's budget and policy framework.

In order to enable effective discussion to take place and to ensure a more flexible committee style of meeting, it was moved and seconded in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30.1, the suspension of Council Procedure Rule 16 (Rules of Debate). Upon being put to the vote, the motion was duly carried.

The debate focussed on the Cost of Living Crisis and presentations were given by the following:

- Theresa Hodgkinson, Chief Executive of the Council
- Kathryn Stacey and Janis Abraham, Citizens' Advice Ashfield
- Angie Peppard and Matt Pike, Our Centre
- Trevor Clay and Yvonne Campbell, Under One Roof Community Resource Centre
- Diane Carter, Katie Jordan and Paula Longden, Mid Nottinghamshire Place Based Partnership.

A State of the District debate then ensued with Members taking the opportunity to raise and discuss their ideas and observations via a question and answer session as agreed.

During the debate, it was moved and seconded in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30.1 the suspension of Council Procedure Rule 23.1 (Conclusion of Proceedings) to enable the meeting to reach its full conclusion and to enable the Leader to summate appropriately. Upon being put to the vote, the motion was duly carried.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Leader of the Council thanked the Council's Members and guests for their contribution and hoped that they had found it informative and useful, particularly as Cabinet Members would now be able to assimilate the comments made and take them into account during the business planning process which was to commence shortly.

The Leader also took the opportunity to present to the Chamber, a Cost of Living 15 Point Plan which outlined the Council's commitment towards helping residents navigate the Cost of Living Crisis whilst simultaneously tackling rising inequality and rising poverty within the District.

RESOLVED

that the Council formally approves the following 15 practical steps to assist the residents of Ashfield through the current cost of living crisis:-

1. Utilise leisure centres as community living hubs for residents to access a warm energy room (including use of electricity charging and Wi-Fi for use of mobile phones/laptops.). Explore options for leisure centre showers to be used for free by our residents.
2. Explore the use of energy rooms at Council buildings.
3. Promote to residents local businesses and voluntary and community organisations which offer warm spaces to residents who cannot afford to heat their homes.
4. Maintain a 100% Council Tax Support Scheme for residents to March 2024.
5. Continue to maintain a cost-of-living hub on the Ashfield District Council website which gives useful information to residents, including signposting residents and businesses to benefits, Council Tax and housing support, Council services support, support for businesses, money, bills and debt support, health and wellbeing support and support from other organisations.
6. Promote help with the cost of living to residents who may not be able to access online information. Utilise Ashfield Matters as a tool to provide timely, up to date information on how residents can access support.
7. Explore options to waive charges to rent rooms to any voluntary organisations who provide help to residents through cost-of-living activities.
8. Support the voluntary sector to secure any available funding which may be able to help residents with the cost of living. Continue to lobby for fairer funding from the Government to continue to provide critical services for residents.
9. Continue to provide money management advice offering free financial health checks and work with the NHS to provide advice and help on healthy eating on a budget.
10. Share and promote the food support locations in Ashfield with residents to support them with feeding their families from organisations such as food banks and food share schemes.
11. Our Housing Teams are available to assist tenants with money management advice to help with daily costs and maximise benefits. Our teams can also ensure your insulation in a Council property is at the appropriate level and external drafts dealt with.

12. Continue successful Spring Clean events including giving residents one free bulky waste collection to save on disposal costs.
13. Work with partners such as the DWP on holding Cost of Living Zones to ensure residents can access all the support and benefits to which they are entitled.
14. The Council will continue to provide 2 hours free parking (this financial year) to encourage residents to shop locally and cut their fuel bills.
15. Continue implementing the Council's successful play park strategy offering free state of art play facilities for families across Ashfield.

(During the final summation, Councillor Sarah Madigan left the meeting at 9.38pm).

The meeting closed at 9.46 pm

Chairman.