

MEETING:	Full Council
DATE:	Thursday, 30 July 2020
TIME:	10.00 am
VENUE:	THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY

MINUTES

Present	The Mayor (Councillor Markham)
Central Ward	- Councillors Bruff and Dyson
Cudworth Ward	- Councillors Hayward, Houghton CBE and Wraith MBE
Darfield Ward	- Councillors Saunders and Smith
Darton East Ward	- Councillors Charlesworth, Hunt and Spence
Darton West Ward	- Councillors A. Cave, T. Cave and Howard
Dearne North Ward	- Councillors Gardiner, Gollick and Phillips
Dearne South Ward	- Councillors Danforth, C. Johnson and Noble
Dodworth Ward	- Councillors P. Birkinshaw, Fielding and Wright
Hoyland Milton Ward	- Councillors Franklin, Shepherd and Stowe
Kingstone Ward	- Councillors Mitchell and Williams
Monk Bretton Ward	- Councillors Felton, Green and Richardson
North East Ward	- Councillors Cherryholme, Ennis OBE and Higginbottom
Old Town Ward	- Councillors Lofts, Newing and Pickering
Penistone East Ward	- Councillors Barnard, Hand-Davis and Wilson
Penistone West Ward	- Councillors David Griffin and Kitching
Rockingham Ward	- Councillors Andrews BEM and Lamb
Royston Ward	- Councillors Cheetham, Makinson and McCarthy
St. Helen's Ward	- Councillors Leech, Platts and Tattersall
Stairfoot Ward	- Councillors Bowler, Gillis and W. Johnson
Wombwell Ward	- Councillors Eastwood, Frost and Daniel Griffin
Worsbrough Ward	- Councillors Carr, Clarke and Lodge

218. Councillor D Birkinshaw - Commemoration

Members of the Council acknowledged the recent passing of Councillor Doug Birkinshaw.

Tributes to his hard work and dedication to the Council, as Chair of the Planning Regulatory Board, member of the Central Area Council and as a local Ward Member were led by Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Leader of the Council, Councillor Bruff (local Ward colleague), Councillor Richardson (interim Chair of the Planning Regulatory Board) and by the Mayor (Councillor Markham). Condolences were also expressed to his wife and family at their sad loss.

Everyone was invited to take part in a minute silence in his memory.

219. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Tattersall declared a non pecuniary interest in Minute No 229 (a) 'Questions by Elected Members' in view of her Membership of the Berneslai Homes Board.

220. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on the 6th and 27th February, 2020 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

221. Communications

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award

The Chief Executive reminded Members that the Council had worked hard as part of the Armed Forces Covenant and had pledged to ensure that the Armed Forces Community would not be disadvantaged in accessing the Council's services after they had served in the military. A commitment had been made to support the Armed Forces Community in Barnsley, therefore she was delighted to announce that the Council had been awarded Gold Standard for its work to support the Armed Forces Community. This was the highest award offered by the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encouraged employers to support defence and the Armed Forces Community and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompassed bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisation that pledged, demonstrated or advocated support to defence and the Armed Forces Community and aligned their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Council's Gold Award was based on meeting a number of criteria that showed what the Authority had done to support the Armed Forces Community.

Some of these included:

- The Armed Forces webpage which had comprehensive information for those who served or had served and their families

- Launching Yorkshire's very first HM Service Armed Forces Walkway – the only one in the Yorkshire and Humberside region
- Celebrating Armed Forces Day working with Armed Forces Groups to raise the profile and attendance at Community led events
- Implementing Human Resources policies to support serving or ex serving personnel who work for the Council
- Working and leading on projects through the Sheffield City Region Mayor's Office and all four local Authorities support to homeless veterans
- New training and e-learning packages

The Council was proud that the authority could now use the Gold Standard Logo to celebrate the fantastic work and dedication of the Teams, Members and the Community Groups the Council worked with that supported the Armed Forces Families in Barnsley.

Thanks and congratulations were extended to all those involved.

Councillor Hayward (Armed Forces Champion) on behalf of serving and retired ex serving forces thanked the Council for being an exemplary employer and for the tremendous achievement in being awarded the Gold Standard. He also asked to thank Jayne Hellowell (Head of Commissioning – Healthier Communities) and her Team who had done a massive amount of work to bring this Gold Standard award home to Barnsley.

Councillor Platts (Cabinet Spokesperson for Adults and Communities) echoed the comments made and stated that this was a brilliant outcome for the Armed Forces Community in Barnsley. She also gave a special thanks to Jayne Hellowell who, as an ex forces member herself had brought energy, focus and passion to the Armed Forces Covenant Group. She expressed her thanks to all concerned in achieving this award.

The Mayor also expressed her thanks to everyone who had contributed to this achievement and especially for the work undertaken by the Chief Executive and Councillor Hayward in his capacity as Armed Forces Champion who had been a massive driving force in this.

222. Public Health - Covid Update

Ms Julia Burrows (Director of Public Health) gave a presentation giving an update of the current position with regard to the Covid 19 pandemic within Barnsley.

The presentation gave details of the following:

- A brief outline of the disease, its impact and the ways in which people could be protected
- A 'look back' over the last five months of the number of Covid 19 cases for England, Yorkshire and the Humber region and for Barnsley
- The number of Covid 19 daily cases so far within Barnsley – as at 28th July, 2020 there were 1976 cases giving a cumulative rate of 804.2 per 100,00 of the population
- Details of the early July figures – which indicated higher rates across South Yorkshire and a reducing number (albeit slower rate) within Barnsley

compared to other 'watchlist' areas. It was noted that this had driven the decision to increase local testing in order to identify more cases

- Information about Covid 19 testing in Barnsley
- Information about enhanced testing – it was noted that 450-475 people were tested per day on average and that 3,52 had been tested within the last 7 days. The information also provided details of the number of positive tests
- A breakdown of the enhanced testing within Barnsley for the last two weeks indicating that the number of new cases remained low despite the undertaking of more testing. In addition, it was pleasing to note that Barnsley was no longer within the top 10 of Local Authorities with the highest infections
- The development of the Outbreak Control Plan and the seven key themes thereof. It was noted that this Plan built on existing health protection plans to identify and suppress possible outbreaks before they gained momentum, put in place control measures and protected the public's health
- The establishment on the 30th June, 2020, composition and remit of an Outbreak Control Engagement Group. This Board oversaw the prevention of Coronavirus transmission within the Borough and ensured that outbreaks were managed effectively if and when they occurred
- The provision of Face Coverings both to staff and to Barnsley residents
- A reminder of the 6 steps that people could do to help control Coronavirus

The Director of Public Health concluded her presentation by thanking all Members for their support during this difficult period.

The Mayor, in thanking the Director of Public Health for her presentation indicated that any Members wanting to know more information and ask further questions should contact the Director of Public Health by email.

223. Recovery Plan - Update

Mr Paul Castle (Service Director Environment and Transportation) gave a presentation giving an update of the current position with regard to Recovery and Renewal as a result of the Covid pandemic.

The presentation gave details of the following:

- The purpose of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy and outlining what the Council was trying to achieve and the involvement of the Council's partners. It was noted that there were five key themes focussing on:
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Business Economy
 - Community Resilience
 - Education and Skills
 - Infrastructure and the Environment
- The Headline Recovery Messages. It was particularly noted that the roadmap for recovery centred around three stages:
 - Restarting Services
 - Recovering the organisation
 - Renewal of the Borough
- The key Health and Wellbeing initiatives involving
 - The Outbreak Control Plan, the Outbreak Control Engagement Board and outbreak Management Group

- The Outbreak Management and Testing arrangements
- The focus on the latent/surge demand on services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services
- To focus on understanding and responding to mental health impacts, and planning for short, medium and long term need
- Business Economy initiatives involving
 - The delivery of financial relief schemes
 - People, Employment and Skills and focusing on interventions
 - Ensuring Regulatory Compliance particularly in relation to the investigation of Covid clusters and contact tracing
 - Complementing the Sheffield City Region work and linking with longer term inclusive economic strategies and applications for funding opportunities
- Community Resilience issues involving
 - Focussing on specific recovery areas
 - Ensuring clear Emergency Response plans were in place – in this respect reference was also made to the need to accommodate the potential for a second spike
 - The restoration of the Democratic arrangements
 - Crime and Disorder initiatives delivered through existing Safer Barnsley Partnership governance arrangements
- Education and Skills initiatives involving
 - Close working with Public Health in relation to the issuing of advice, guidance and support including the development of outbreak plans and associated guidance
 - The reopening from September of Schools, Early Years Settings and other Educational settings
 - Transition plans for pupils moving educational phases
 - Summer Provision by schools
- Environment and Infrastructure developments including
 - The safe use of public transport
 - The restarting of Highways programmes and Neighbourhood services
 - The opening of public realm and green spaces
 - The work being undertaken to increase the levels of active travel and particularly to retain improvements in air quality
 - Working with the Ministry of Justice to reinstate the judiciary system
 - Public Transport and Active travel initiatives
 - Work in relation to SEND and Free Travel
 - The work being undertaken to build on Carbon Gains
- Business Continuity – working with and supporting staff. Initiatives included
 - Workforce support, Mental Health and Wellbeing
 - Smart working initiatives
 - Planning for concurrent events such as Brexit and Winter Planning
- The Communications approach, guiding principles and key messages in relation to Recovery and Renewal
- The Recovery Roadmap identified under the five key themes for:
 - June and July
 - July to October

The Service Director concluded his presentation by thanking all Members for their support during this difficult period.

The Mayor, in thanking the Service Director (Environment and Transportation) for his presentation indicated that any Members wanting to know more information and ask further questions should contact the Service Director by email.

224. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019-20

Moved by Councillor Ennis – Seconded by Councillor Lodge; and

RESOLVED that the first Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report be received and that the contribution of the work undertaken in further improving services across the Borough be noted.

225. Minutes of Regulatory Boards, Scrutiny Committee and Area Councils - Various

Moved by Councillor Shepherd - Seconded by Councillor Makinson; and

RESOLVED that the minutes as printed and now submitted of the proceedings of the following Regulatory Boards, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Area Councils held on the dates specified be received:

- Planning Regulatory Board – 18th February, 17th March, 19th May and 16th June, 2020
- General Licensing Regulatory Board – 19th February, 2020
- General Licensing Regulatory Board Panel (notes of meetings) – various
- Statutory Licensing Regulatory Board – 19th February and Special Meeting held on the 3rd June, 2020
- Audit and Governance Committee – 3rd June and Special Meeting held on the 25th June, 2020
- Appeals, Awards and Standards Regulatory Board Panels – various
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Thriving and Vibrant Economy Workstream – 4th February and 9th June, 2020
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (People Achieving their Potential Workstream) – 10th March and 9th July, 2020
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12th May, 2020
- Central Area Council – 13th January, 9th March, and 9th June, 2020
- Dearne Area Council – 20th January, 16th March and 8th June, 2020
- North Area Council – 27th January, 16th March and 5th June, 2020
- North East Area Council – 30th January and 4th June, 2020
- Penistone Area Council – 13th February and 4th June, 2020
- South Area Council – 14th February and 5th June, 2020

226. Cabinet Meetings - various

Moved by Councillor Sir Stephen Houghton, CBE – Seconded by Councillor Andrews BEM; and

RESOLVED that the minutes as printed and now submitted of the Cabinet Meetings held on the 22nd January, 5th and 19th February, 18th March, 15th and 29th April, 13th and 27th May, 10th and 24th June and 8th July, 2020 be received.

227. Questions relating to Joint Authority, Police and Crime Panel and Combined Authority Business

The Chief Executive reported that she had received no questions from Elected Members in accordance with Standing Order No. 12.

228. Joint Authority, Police and Crime Panel and Combined Authority Meetings - minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Joint Authority, Police and Crime Panel and Combined Authority meetings as detailed below be noted:

- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority – 25th November, 2019, 13th January, 10th February and 22nd June, 2020 (Annual and Ordinary Meetings Draft Minutes)
- Police and Crime Panel – 2nd December, 2019, 6th February and 8th June, 2020 (Annual Meeting Draft Minutes)
- South Yorkshire Pensions Authority – 23rd January, 19th March and 11th June, 2020 (Annual and Ordinary Meetings)
- Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority Board – 27th January, 15th April and 1st June, 2020

229. Questions by Elected Members

The Chief Executive reported that she had received no questions from Elected Members in accordance with Standing Order No. 11.

Note: a maximum of 30 minutes was allocated for this item in accordance with Standing Order No 11 (2)(d).

(a) Councillor Ennis

'How many Berneslai Homes Tenants are in receipt of Universal Credit Payments and how many of those are in rent arrears? In providing this response could you please indicate the number and percentage of claimants and for those in rent arrears?'

Councillor Gardiner, Cabinet Spokesperson for Core Services, thanked Councillor Ennis for the question and stated that at the end of June 2020 some 20% (3669) of Council tenants were claiming Universal Credit including the housing element. 66% of tenants had outstanding balances and the arrears represented 56% of gross rent arrears. The average debt of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit was £487 compared to £220 for those not in receipt of Universal Credit.

During 2019/20 the overall rent collection rate for tenants claiming Universal Credit was 93.82% compared to an overall collection rate of 97.48%. The Cabinet Spokesperson stated that he felt that this was an excellent rate of collection under what were very extreme circumstances.

Councillor Ennis commented that he had submitted this question three months ago primarily because at that time, Hull City Council had a high number of their tenants in receipt of Universal Credit who were in rent arrears and he had wanted to contrast Barnsley's statistics with there. The Council had, however, had another three

months of crisis since the question had been tabled and he asked, therefore, as a supplementary question, whether rent arrears had gone up in general as a consequence of Covid 19 and in particular in relation to tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.

The Cabinet Spokesperson stated that there had been a slight increase in arrears but as previously stated, this had not had a great impact on collection rates or indeed the amount of Council Tax that the Council had received. He also stated that anyone who was in receipt of Universal Credit or any other Council Tax Payer who was encountering difficulties in paying should contact the Finance Department for help and support.

(b) Councillor Hunt

'As of mid-July the rates of Covid-19 in Barnsley are falling but are still above the national average. The Council's Public Health Department should be congratulated for the role that they have played during the crisis. In other parts of the country, including Leicester, local authorities have criticised Government for the lack of availability of key data to be able to effectively tackle local outbreaks. Is Barnsley Council getting the data it needs from the Government?'

Councillor Andrews, Deputy Leader, thanked Councillor Hunt for his question and for the recognition of the work done by Public Health as well as all other Council Staff during this Covid 19 crisis. This had been very much a whole team effort working in collaboration with Partners across local and wider sectors.

Access to data that supported the proactive and reactive local outbreak work had improved, particularly in recent weeks. This included local data sharing with Partner organisation and access to more detailed data from national bodies. It was appreciated that complete and immediate data provision may not be possible due to the complexity and fast pace of the current situation, however, the Council would continue to make the best use of what was available to guide its actions.

As new data became accessible to Local Authorities, the Council had been learning how to use this and, therefore, had knowledge of where gaps remained. An example included clarifying how many people (and who) had used different testing sites across Barnsley (including those testing positive) so there could be a better understanding of local transmission so that there could be appropriately targeted intervention.

There were opportunities to feedback regarding data requirements and this had helped to address some needs, although others remained outstanding. In addition, open data sharing enabled during the response phase of Covid 19 had been extremely valuable in being able to support the local population holistically and opportunities to extend this into recovery and beyond would be very welcome.

Councillor Hunt thanked the Deputy Leader for his response. He commented that it sounded as though the Council was receiving most of the data it needed but perhaps not all that it needed to be able to best tackle any local outbreaks that occurred. He asked, therefore, as a supplementary question, what the Council was doing to try to obtain or improve the level of data it received from government.

The Deputy Leader commented that the Authority was in contact with Public Health England and the government at all times and he stated that the information received had improved over the last few weeks, although he acknowledged that sometimes this was delayed. He particularly paid tribute to the work of Dr A Snell at Barnsley District General Hospital and stated that information was as up to date as possible and this was then forwarded to the Outbreak Control Board for information and action.

(c) Councillor Wright

Could the Cabinet member for Place please advise on the following:

- *How many trees have been lifted or felled in Penny Pie Park?*
- *How many have been transplanted?*
- *Why have those that have been discarded not been transplanted?*
- *How many new trees are to be planted in the Park?*
- *What will be the net gain or net loss of trees in Penny Pie Park?*

Councillor Lamb, Cabinet Spokesperson for Place (Environment and Transportation) commented that of the 239 trees that were in the park, 72 had been removed. This was made up of the original 66 trees identified, but also an additional 6 of which were initially identified for relocation but on closer inspection on the day proved not to be viable.

Initially, 15 trees had been identified as being a suitable size to be uplifted and replanted within the park prior to any construction works being carried out and 9 of these had been successfully relocated.

The trees that had to be removed had not been viable for relocation due to several reasons including issues with roots systems and growth issues.

The Authority was committed to planting more trees than were removed with a minimum of 243 trees in Penny Pie Park after completion of the works. There would be a minimum gain of 4 trees within the park.

During the consultation period concerns were raised by members of the public in relation to the number of trees in the park and these very encouraging figures very much demonstrated that the Council had listened to what had been said and had acted in response to the public consultation.

Councillor Wright declined to ask a supplementary question.

(d) Councillor Hunt

'The Leader must be aware of the national campaign by Excluded UK, seeking to secure financial support from the Government for the millions of self-employed individuals in the UK who have fallen through the gaps of support and found themselves with zero income during the Covid crisis. What is the authority doing to identify and support those individuals, from a vast range of backgrounds and professions, who live in Barnsley borough and have found themselves in this dire situation?'

Councillor Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson for Place (Regeneration and Culture), thanked Councillor Hunt for drawing attention to the work of Excluded UK. As anyone who had been self employed 'excluded' was exactly what it was felt like on many occasions especially during the current crisis. The national media had reported quite widely that many of the actions that the government took did exclude the self employed from obtaining the support they needed. He also wanted to take this opportunity to thank the officers, advisers and partners who had done a fantastic job in keeping abreast of the constantly changing picture of what had been available in terms of help and support. It had been an incredibly taxing job dealing with government announcements on one day with the publication of the details several days later which sometimes bore no resemblance to that had been published. This had often caused a great deal of confusion and distress to business owners and the feedback received from those businesses and the self employed had been that the advisors had been exemplary in minimising that confusion and signposting them to appropriate services.

The Council had already provided support to self-employed individuals who needed it and had a good working relationship with the sector.

- There was a dedicated helpline and web chat to offer support and advice to those suffering financial difficulty.
- There had been a suspension of all Council Tax recovery action and offers had been made of Council Tax payment holidays as well as action on rents and Business Rates.
- The Council had processed over 5,000 new claims for the Local Council Tax support scheme many from self-employed applicants.
- Individuals had been signposted to apply for the governments Self-Employed Income Support Scheme
- Individuals had been supported to apply for Universal Credit and other benefits
- People had been referred to other government support such as those provided by the Arts Council and Enterprise Nation and others where there was sector specific support for their businesses – this was particularly wide ranging
- The Award-winning Enterprising Barnsley Team had provided a range of business support services, specifically the Launchpad Team who were providing a wide range of online support to individuals who had started or were starting their own businesses and to those who were self employed
- A new helpdesk provided by the Employment and Skills Team was supporting individuals
- The Council was leading the way in working with the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority in their recovery plan and activities to support companies and individuals to recover from the crisis

Councillor Hunt thanked the Cabinet Spokesperson for his response. He too felt that Enterprising Barnsley and the Council had done a fantastic job to support small businesses and he made particular note of the speed that the grants had been distributed to businesses at the end of March which had been fantastic. He felt that the primary role of providing support was that of central government and indeed 239 MP's across all political parties had signed up to the Excluded UK all party Parliamentary Group, however, the MP's for Barnsley Central, Barnsley East, Penistone and Stocksbridge and Wentworth and Dearne had not joined this Group and he asked, as a supplementary question, whether or not the Cabinet

Spokesperson could use his influence to ask these MP's to join this Group which was striving to help individuals who were struggling at this very difficult time.

The Cabinet Spokesperson stated that he was happy to do that and also stated that Councillor Hunt could also do this in his capacity as a resident of the area.

(e) Councillor Greenhough

'The Leader has announced, in a letter to all residents, the challenging financial position that the Council finds itself in as a result of the Covid 19 crisis.

What action is the Council taking to balance this year's budget, and how will that be approved?'

Councillor Gardiner, Cabinet Spokesperson for Core Services, thanked Councillor Greenhough for his question. The anticipated budget gap would be met from a combination of a continued moratorium on all non-essential spend and the postponement of many of the investments that had been planned to be taken forward this year. Although this meant that the Authority would be able to meet the budget gap and deliver a balanced budget at the end of the year it was unlikely that the Council would be able to concentrate its efforts totally on the recovery of the local economy and communities. He stressed that from a financial perspective whilst the Authority was able to meet the budget deficit and could look forward to future years and an improvement in the financial forecast of the whole country, unfortunately the Council did not have sufficient reserves to be able to meet every need of every resident but would continue to fight to meet those expectations, needs and concerns.

Councillor Greenhough was not in attendance to ask a supplementary question.

(f) Councillor Kitching

'The theatre industry and the arts in general are likely to be one of the last to recover from the Covid crisis, and some theatres may not recover at all. We are rightly proud of our theatres in Barnsley and our thriving arts scene will no doubt form an essential part of the town's recover and regeneration.

What level of support is the Council offering to local theatres to ensure they survive? For example, will there be help with rent and leases?'

Councillor Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson for Place (Regeneration and Culture) thanked Councillor Kitching for her question. He stated that all Members shared the concerns expressed about the arts and the creative sector and, as expressed in the national media, there was great concern at the number of theatres, including national theatres, that had announced long term and even permanent closures. This was certainly not something that was wanted to be seen in Barnsley.

Barnsley Theatres had benefited from the Government Grant Scheme of either £25,000 or £10,000 (depending on eligibility criteria) and this was distributed by the Council at an early stage in the crisis in order to alleviate immediate pressures and anxiety for staff. All theatres had also benefited from the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Business Rates Relief Scheme which meant that they had not had to pay business rates this financial year.

The Culture and Visitor Economy Team was also supporting theatres where they may be eligible for additional funding, for example through the Stronger Towns Bid, High Street Heritage Action Zone Fund and the Future High Streets bid and a number of others. The Service had also commissioned a report by Chamberlain Walker Economics on behalf of the Sheffield City Region which made a business case for investment in Arts, Culture and Heritage in the region which would help to position the sector for future investment as it had been a major contributor to the town in recent years.

The government had recently announced a substantial amount of additional funding for the arts, culture and heritage sector which would be distributed by the Arts Council, National heritage Lottery Fund and Historic England. The Council had a good relationship with those organisations and the Culture and Visitor Economy Service was in close contact with them and was currently awaiting decisions and criteria to apply.

All creative and cultural organisations and businesses could access Enterprising Barnsley and a number had already received advice and support including the Launchpad start up programme. The Council was ensuring that it had the relevant knowledge available to help companies in that sector with their recovery from Covid.

Referring back to the previous answer provided to Councillor Hunt, the Arts Council had issued grants to individual self-employed artists and to individual creative talents and a number of local artists had been able to benefit from that scheme.

Councillor Kitching thanked Councillor Cheetham for his incredibly reassuring response and she asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Council would consider over the coming weeks and months putting on something like an open air theatre event such as a fenced ticketed area in somewhere like Locke Park that would allow the theatre industry to begin to re-start in a safe socially-distanced manner and get money back into the pockets of many self employed people involved in that industry.

The Cabinet Spokesperson stated that such events would commence as soon as possible but the current environment made this complex. There were, however, other avenues to explore and Members could not have failed to notice the extraordinary innovative work being undertaken on digital platforms that the Culture and Theatres Teams had made in recent weeks. This had been noticed around the world and had been picked up in the national and international media including at the virtual Mayor's Parade.

Many events and virtual tours had been undertaken online. These digital events would not only raise awareness of cultural and arts activities but could also assist in bringing in income. He commented that some theatres were looking at long term closures and would possibly not be opening until well into next year if not later. It was pleasing to note, therefore, that local theatres were looking to reopen hopefully towards the end of the year.

(g) Councillor Kitching

'Leisure centres and swimming pools are receiving very little support from the government. Given the importance of exercise on both physical and mental health

and well-being, what are the Council's plans to keep leisure centres open in this time of huge financial uncertainty?'

Councillor Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson for Place (Regeneration and Culture) thanked Councillor Kitching for the question. He stated that all Council Sports Centres closed on the 21st March, 2020 following the government announcement. 88% of the staff had been furloughed with the remaining 12% being retained to perform essential maintenance duties.

Officers engaged with the Senior Management Team at Barnsley Premier Leisure and were successful in obtaining business rates relief under the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Scheme. This was for all sites in the Borough. In addition, during this time it was thought prudent to bring forward planned maintenance programmes which would otherwise have meant closing certain sites to be able to get the work done. This had negated the need for further closures and would not affect future revenue or operation.

More recently, plans had been drawn up for the reopening of the Leisure Centres and these were successfully implemented on the 25th July, 2020 when the facilities were reopened. Officers from the Council and from Barnsley Premier Leisure were continuing to work together to monitor the situation and to react to any further announcements by central government. Further information had recently been issued in relation to swimming pools and gyms.

The Council Leisure Centres were in a slightly more difficult position than some private operators as they were seen more as a public service with more vulnerable people in attendance. The Dorothy Hyman Centre, for example, was used by some NHS services and there were, therefore, vulnerable people on site. The Council was, however, looking to have as many services up and running as possible.

Councillor Kitching commented on the fantastic news about the phased opening of the Centres but she accepted the challenges around that. As this was an important public service and the Council was going to be faced with difficult financial decisions, she asked, as a supplementary question, whether the Council would be in a position to offer assurances to residents that it would be able to keep all of its Leisure Centres open going forwards over the next few years.

The Cabinet Spokesperson stated that he would like to give that assurance but in the current financial climate this was not possible. It was certainly the intention of the Council, however, to maintain its investment and he hoped that the planned maintenance and investment being made currently would give reassurance to residents.

230. Question by a Member of the Public

The Council received a written question received from a Member of the Public together with the response provided by the appropriate Cabinet Support Member.

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Chair

