

MINUTES OF COUNCIL

24 SEPTEMBER 2025

PRESENT:

The Mayor (Councillor Brown), Councillors Barnett, Bennett, Daly, Dumbleton, C Edwards, S Edwards, Freeman, Garcia, Gillias, Harrington, Hassell, Henderson, Howling, Karadiar, D Keeling, J Keeling, Lawrence, Lewis, Livesey, McKenzie, Maoudis, Mistry, Moran, O'Rourke, Parker, Picker, Poole, Robinson, Russell, Sandison, Sayani, Simpson-Vince, Srivastava, Thomas, Thompson Timms, Trimble, Ward and Willis.

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors New and Roodhouse.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2025 were approved and signed by the Mayor.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Item 8(a)(1) – St Andrew's Church public realm projects – Councillor Sandison (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of the church being located within his ward and having brought a previous notice of motion requesting Community Minster status be given to the church).

Item 8(a)(1) – St Andrew's Church public realm projects – Councillor O'Rourke (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a trustee of the church).

Item 8(a)(1) – St Andrew's Church public realm projects – Councillor Ward (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of the Friends of St Andrew's Church).

Item 8(a)(1) – St Andrew's Church public realm projects – Councillor Gillias (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of having carried out work on the church in the past).

Item 8(a)(4) – Centenary Parks Allotments - Councillor Freeman (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being Chair of Newbold Community Partnership).

Item 8(a)(4) – Centenary Parks Allotments - Councillor Livesey (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a resident of Newbold).

Item 8(a)(4) – Centenary Parks Allotments - Councillors S Edwards and Thomas (non-pecuniary interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being members of Lansdowne Allotments Association).

Item 8(a)(4) – Centenary Parks Allotments - Councillor C Edwards (non-pecuniary interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of an Allotments Association).

Item 8(a)(3) - Capital Programme 2025/26 – Queen's Diamond Jubilee Centre Section 106 funding - Councillor McKenzie (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a member of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Centre).

Item 10(a) – Notice of Motion - Councillor Simpson-Vince (non-pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of being a Ward Councillor).

Item 10(a) – Notice of Motion – Councillor Ward (pecuniary interest as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors).

Councillor Ward left the meeting during agenda item 10(a) and took no part in the voting and discussion thereon.

25. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

It was with deep respect and sadness that the Council mourned the passing of Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent whose lifelong dedication to public service and charitable work had left a lasting legacy.

Her example of service and compassion was such to continue to inspire us all. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor extended her sincere condolences to the Royal Family.

Everyone present who was able stood in a moment's silence of respect for the late Duchess.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that the Council had been awarded the Silver Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Award by the Ministry of Defence.

This award recognises the Council's commitment to supporting the armed forces community, including reservists, veterans, and military families. The Silver Award is granted to employers who go beyond their Armed Forces Covenant pledges, demonstrating practical and sustained support through positive HR policies, advocacy, and flexible working arrangements for service personnel.

The Council has updated its policies in support of army veterans, reservists and cadet volunteers, ensuring that it recognises the skills service people have acquired that would be suited to employment with us. The Council also supports any employees whose spouses are currently serving in either reserve or full roles within the military.

This achievement reflects the Council's ongoing dedication to the values of the Armed Forces Covenant and our support for those who serve.

The Council plans to work towards the gold award ensuring that it is armed forces friendly, whilst also reaching out to veterans within the community, offering support for their welfare needs.

The Mayor wished to particularly thank Leigh Caswell, the Council's Armed Forces Officer Champion, for all of his dedication and hard work. Leigh served with the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers as a Lance Corporal for seven years. Leigh attended the meeting and was presented with the award by the Mayor.

The Mayor was pleased to inform Members that the teams within the Leisure and Wellbeing portfolio were recently shortlisted as a finalist for the Best Service Team of the Year for Sports, Leisure and Cultural Service at the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards. APSE works with over 300 councils across the UK, promoting excellence in public service.

The nomination celebrated and recognised the social value of services of Sport and Recreation, The Benn Hall, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum and the Council's Parks and Open Spaces and the impact delivered supporting the health and wellbeing of residents.

Across the whole portfolio, activities generate over £3m of social value impact, delivering key services to children & young people, families and adults within the borough.

The Mayor congratulated all officers within the Leisure and Wellbeing portfolio for their incredible efforts.

Sherbourne Recycling Ltd, of which the Council is a shareholder, won the Best Commercial and Entrepreneurship Initiative.

26. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Council considered the report of the Human Resources Manager (Part 1 – agenda Item 5) concerning the appointment of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service at the Council.

RESOLVED THAT – Dan Green be appointed as permanent Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of Rugby Borough Council with immediate effect.

27. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

Council considered the report of the Acting Chief Executive (Part 1 – agenda Item 6) concerning the appointment of Monitoring Officer for the Council.

RESOLVED THAT - John Murphy be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer and to hold the constitutionally delegated functions of the Chief Officer – Legal and Governance.

28. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10

(a) Councillor Garcia asked the Finance, Performance, Legal and Governance Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mistry:

“Can the Portfolio Holder please inform Council as to the expenditure used on consultants in the year 2024/2025?”

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

“Consultants are used to access specialised experts and increase capacity for specific projects. This approach enables the Council to respond flexibly to emerging needs without maintaining a permanent in-house team for every specialist function. There are four core reasons for Rugby using consultants.

- Gain specialist knowledge and skills
- Capacity and resource management
- Independent and objective perspectives
- Cost effectiveness

As a simple summary over the last five years (2019–2024), consultancy spend averaged around £400,000 a year (£2m in total).

In 2024/25, the Council spent £627,000 on consultants through the General Fund. Of this, £210,000 was recovered from external sources such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and developer contributions, leaving a net cost to the Council of £417,000. That equates to less than 2% of our £22m General Fund budget.

The current rate of spending is consistent and not a new area of activity. Much of this work is either legally required, directly funded by grants, or agreed through the Council’s budget-setting processes.

Taking separately, consultant spend from the Housing Revenue Account was £119,000. The spend here in the Housing Revenue Account largely relates to the stock condition surveys, an essential piece of work that was approved in December 2023 and accelerated during 2024/25. In addition, work in this Council area has also yielded a £10.7m grant under the Warm Homes Scheme which is now coming on stream.

Examples of how the Council have benefited from the use of consultants during 2024/25 includes:

Local Plan Evidence Base

- Specialist consultants were procured to produce evidence bases for the Local Plan which totalled £48,000 and was agreed by Council as part of annual budget setting. In 2026/27 Local Plan spend on consultants will be covered by a £300,000 government grant to support Local Plan making.

Public Realm Masterplan

- Specialist consultants were also used to produce the adopted Public Realm Masterplan; Of this cost, £54,000 was funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which reduced the cost to the Council.

Town Centre Regeneration

- Recognition of the need for specialist advice on key council projects is reflected in the establishment of the Town Centre Reserve. During 2024/25 £267,000 was drawn down from the reserve to support regeneration in the town centre. In November we will be bringing the bi-annual report to Council on spend and progress on Town Centre projects.”

Councillor Garcia then asked the Portfolio Holder why the figures she had obtained from officers were different to those in his response. Councillor Mistry stated that the figures had been checked and he had been transparent in his response the question. He undertook to liaise with the Chief Financial Officer to double check the figures and would clarify with Councillor Garcia.

(b) Councillor Poole asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Moran:

“At a meeting of Council on 5th June 2024 you spoke as Leader of the Council and stated that your priority as Leader was to bring in outside expertise to look at the Council finances, having said on numerous occasions that there was a £2 million black hole in the Councils finances from the previous administration.

1. Can the Leader explain to Council when the outside body began the exercise looking at the Council’s finances?
2. Can the Leader inform Council when the report was finalised and sent to Council?
3. Can the Leader explain to Council where the report has been for the last 12 months?
4. Can the Leader explain why this report was not published to the 42 members of this Council?
5. Can the Leader explain to Council why in the in 33 pages of the report there is no mention of the £2 million black hole. Is this because there was not one?

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

When the Labour Group took on the administration of the Council with the Liberal Democrat Supply and Confidence agreement, I committed to undertake a financial health check of the Council’s finances. The results of the work intended to inform our decision making in relation to the new Corporate Strategy, the Medium-Term financial plan and ultimately to ensure that we remain as a safe and legal Authority. There were two pieces of analysis that were undertaken:

a) CIPFA

1. In August 2024 officers engaged with CIPFA to undertake an independent review of reserves, to provide independent assurance that the Council has sufficient reserves for the medium term. The work was also used to understand that there are sufficient funds to enable the delivery of the administration’s priorities.
2. A draft report was presented to the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, Portfolio holders and Liberal Democrat Spokespersons on 24 September.
3. The report was compiled for the administration of the Council and the analysis gained has featured in the budget setting process for 2025/26 and the statement of accounts for 2024/25, all of which has been reported publicly.
4. The document was produced for the Leader of the Council and has been circulated with Liberal Democrat Spokespersons for consideration.
5. The report was procured as an analysis of reserves not an analysis of the MTFP, there is reference across the document to the financial challenges

facing the authority using the approved MTFP (February 2024) to provide opinion on the financial position of the authority.

This information has been shared with the Leader of the Conservative Group when requested.

- b) The Local Government Association carried out a review to how the alignment of the Council's finances can support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy – there was no report from this – the representative from the LGA provided a workshop to the Leader, Portfolio Holder, Liberal Democrat Spokespersons, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 officer.

(c) Councillor Garcia asked the Growth, Investment, Digital and Communications Portfolio Holder, Councillor Robinson:

“Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm the expenditure of the Economic Development fund has spent on consultants during 2024/25 and so far in 2025/26?”

Councillor Robinson, Growth, Investment, Digital and Communications Portfolio Holder, provided the following response:

“In 2024/25 there was no spend on consultants from the Economic Development Budget.

In 2025/26 there has been a £750 spent on consultants which was Rugby Borough Council's contribution towards a tourism study in conjunction with North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth Councils.”

29. REPORT OF CABINET – 15 SEPTEMBER 2025

Council considered the report of Cabinet of 15 September 2025 (agenda item 8(a)).

With regard to item 8(a)(1) – St Andrew's Church public realm projects, a Member requested a separate vote on the item. The Mayor took a vote and declared it carried.

RESOLVED THAT –

(1) a supplementary General Fund Revenue budget of £0.210m for 2025/26 be approved to fund external improvement works to St Andrew's Church, to be financed from the Town Centre Strategy Reserve;

(2) a supplementary General Fund Capital budget of £0.081m be approved and added to the capital programme for 2025/26 to fund external improvement works to St Andrew's Church, to be financed from the Town Centre Strategy Reserve the report be confirmed and adopted; and

(3) the recommendations of the remaining items within the Cabinet report be confirmed and adopted.

30. REPORT OF AUDIT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE – 21 JULY 2025

RESOLVED THAT – the report be confirmed and adopted.

31. REPORTS OF OFFICERS

(a) Proposed change to membership of Scrutiny Committee

Council considered the report of the Chief Officer – Legal and Governance (Part 1 – agenda item 9(a)) concerning a proposed change to the membership of Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

RESOLVED THAT – the revised membership of Scrutiny Committee, as outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report, be approved for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year, subject to Councillor Parker being included on the membership list.

32. NOTICES OF MOTION PUSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 11

In accordance with the Constitution, Councillor Simpson-Vince moved and Councillor Willis seconded the following notice of motion:

“Council notes that in 2022 planning permission was unanimously refused by this Council for the use of portacabins to house migrants at Dunchurch Park Hotel. This was initially allowed by the Planning Inspector in in January 2023 for 18 months and then extended for a further 18 months in January 2025, despite promises to end the use of migrant hotels.

This Council further notes the challenges made by other authorities to end the use of these unsuitable sites and the impact on a heritage asset, as well as the impact on local residents in Dunchurch, Thurlaston and Bilton. Additionally, Council notes with concern reports that the Government is now seeking to repurpose residential homes as Homes in Multiple Occupation for the use of migrants, contrary to this Council’s recently adopted Article 4 Direction limiting the concentration of HMOs in residential areas.

Council resolves:

(1) to request the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council's legal team, to urgently assess the merits of seeking to use legal methods prevent the use of local hotels for migrant accommodation where it is deemed to be in the best interests of the community and ensure that no further extension to the use of Dunchurch Park Hotel is permitted. We also request the Chief Executive to ask officers to consider every option and seek legal advice on using injunctions, stop notices and other planning enforcement to avoid the further use of local hotels for housing migrants;

(2) to write to the Home Office expressing this Council's concerns about the use of hotels in our area for migrant accommodation and to request full consultation with this Council on any future decisions, including the use of HMOs in residential areas;

(3) to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, calling on the Government to adopt the Conservative proposals to clarify in law and policy beyond doubt that such asylum hotels should always require change of use; and

(4) to call on the Government to develop a sustainable, properly planned, and community consulted approach to housing migrants and introducing suitable deterrents to those illegally entering the UK.”

Further to debate, Councillor C Edwards moved and Councillor Moran seconded the following amendment (amendments in **bold font**):

~~“Council notes that in 2022 planning permission was unanimously refused by this Council Planning Committee for the use of portacabins pods as ancillary accommodation to house families of migrants seeking refuge at Dunchurch Park Hotel. This was initially allowed by the Planning Inspector in January 2023 for 18 months, and then extended for a further 18 months in January 2025, following a further appeal to the Planning Inspector, despite promises to end the use of migrant hotels.~~

~~This Council further notes the challenges made by other authorities to end the use of temporary accommodation sites of this nature - recognising their potential impacts on heritage assets and the wider community. these unsuitable sites and the impact on a heritage asset, as well as the impact on local residents in Dunchurch, Thurlaston and Bilton. Additionally, Council notes with concern reports that the Government is now seeking to repurpose residential homes as Homes in Multiple Occupation for the use of migrants, contrary to this Council’s recently adopted Article 4 Direction limiting the concentration of HMOs in residential areas.~~

Council adopted a new Corporate Strategy 2025-35 at its meeting held in November 2024. The clear ambition for a greener, fairer and better Rugby defines the DNA of this Council and must characterise all policies at all times.

Council acknowledges and thanks the work of different agencies and volunteers supporting families and children living in contingency accommodation in Rugby Borough.

Council welcomes the agreement of Article 4 in February 2025 through Notices of Motions from Labour and Lib Dem Councillors to enable local communities to have a say on the density of HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupation) in Rugby Borough. Council welcomes a further strengthening of that Article 4 notice by additional safeguards for local communities in the proposed emerging Local Plan.

This Council notes the work of the current government in tackling irregular immigration and specifically welcomes work to tackle the criminal gangs in the Channel putting people’s lives at risk.

Further it is noted that this Council has already written to, and maintains frequent dialogue with, the Home Office regarding the use of hotels in our area.

Council Resolves:

- (1) To request that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council’s legal team, seeks up to date external legal advice regarding the use of hotels as asylum accommodation and the options available to the Council regarding the further use of local hotels as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers.**

~~To request the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council's legal team, to urgently assess the merits of seeking to use legal methods prevent the use of local hotels for migrant accommodation where it is deemed to be in the best interests of the community and ensure that no further extension to the use of Dunchurch Park Hotel is permitted. We also request the Chief Executive to ask officers to consider every option and seek legal advice on using injunctions, stop notices and other planning enforcement to avoid the further use of local hotels for housing migrants.~~

~~To write to the Home Office expressing this Council's concerns about the use of hotels in our area for migrant accommodation and to request full consultation with this Council on any future decisions, including the use of HMOs in residential areas.~~

~~To write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, calling on the Government to adopt the Conservative proposals to clarify in law and policy beyond doubt that such asylum hotels should always require change of use.~~

- (2) ~~To call on the Government to **further** develop a sustainable, properly planned, and community consulted approach to housing migrants **asylum accommodation** and introduce suitable deterrents to those illegally entering the UK. **continue its work to tackle irregular immigration and specifically its work to tackle the criminal organised gangs in the Channel putting people's lives at risk.**~~
- (3) ~~To call on the Government to implement an urgent programme to clear the 70,000 asylum-claim backlog so that the hotels and other asylum accommodation becomes redundant and can be returned to community use."~~

Further to debate, the Mayor put the amendment to the vote and declared it carried. The Mayor then put the substantive motion to the vote, as amended, and declared it carried.

RESOLVED THAT - Council resolves:

- (1) to request that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council's legal team, seeks up to date external legal advice regarding the use of hotels as asylum accommodation and the options available to the Council regarding the further use of local hotels as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers;
- (2) to call on the Government to further develop a sustainable, properly planned, and community consulted approach to asylum accommodation and continue its work to tackle irregular immigration and specifically its work to tackle the criminal organised gangs in the Channel putting people's lives at risk; and
- (3) to call on the Government to implement an urgent programme to clear the 70,000 asylum-claim backlog so that the hotels and other asylum accommodation becomes redundant and can be returned to community use.

33. 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 Governance Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds they involved the likely disclosure of information defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

34. PRIVATE REPORT OF CABINET – 15 SEPTEMBER 2025

RESOLVED THAT – the private report be confirmed and adopted.

35. PRIVATE REPORT OF OFFICERS

(a) Appointment of Deputy Mayor 2025/26

Note: Councillor Sayani left the meeting for this item and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon.

Council considered the private report of the Chief Officer – Legal and Governance (Part 2 – agenda item 2(a)) concerning the appointment of Deputy Mayor for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

RESOLVED THAT – Councillor Sayani be appointed as Deputy Mayor for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

MAYOR