

THE CABINET
22nd January, 2024

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, Cusworth, Lelliott, Roche and Sheppard.

Also in attendance Councillor Clark (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brookes.

116. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

117. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

8 public questions had been received:

1. Mr. Marston asked a question in relation to the proposed housing developments on Boswell Street. He stated that at the time the Herringthorpe Leisure Centre was demolished, it was in the Council Plan to build houses on the site. However, it was claimed by residents to be in contravention of the conditions of the use of the land of Herringthorpe playing fields from when it was acquired by the Council and in the terms of the Borough of Rotherham Act 1928. That stated that the land was to be used for recreational activities and that housing could not be developed on the land. The Council took notice of that and at the Cabinet meeting on 14th March, 2012, a possible workaround was discussed and recommended. The work around was that the Council would work with Fields in Trust to establish a Deed of Dedication to safeguard the fields. Two areas would be taken out of the land, the leisure centre site and the old nurseries and depot of Boswell Street. These would be released for housing on the understanding that the proceeds of the development would be applied for enhancing the facilities of the playing fields, for example a 1,000 seat stand at the running track with indoor training, all weather pitches and a new play area. Mr. Marston stated that he could find no further mention of the Fields in Trust plan which appeared to have been dropped as was the idea of building housing on the leisure centre site. He asked what the outcome was of the discussions with Fields in Trust? He also asked whether a link could be provided to the documents in the minutes of the next meeting?

The new proposal to develop the old nursery and depot area suggested, in Mr. Marston's view, that the Council would need to resuscitate the above-mentioned proposals to set up a Deed of Dedication with Fields in Trust to legitimate the position. He asked if those discussions had been started?

The Leader responded by stating that those discussions had not been started and that he did not know what the outcome of the discussion was in March 2012. The decision that was on the agenda today was simply to restart the process in relation to one of the sites Mr. Marston had referred to. Both sites were allocated for housing in the Council's Local Plan. The Council's planning position was that, at some stage, there would be housing delivered on both of those sites. However, the current meeting was not going to complete the final sign off of any plans as there were no plans yet for what would go on the site. There was no detail work through of what that would look like or who might live there etc. It was just a decision in principle that the Council would look to put houses on the former nursery site. All the other things mentioned by Mr. Marston would be worked through afterwards as part of the planning process. Planning permission would need to be given, along with engagement with residents.

In his supplementary, Mr. Marston stated that it was a brownfield site in appearance but fundamentally, he asked if the land for the old nurseries or depot was part of the land sited in the Rotherham Borough Act of 1928? Was that land part of the land that was acquired in 1928 and therefore subject to the same things which were: "any lands set apart under this section [of the Rotherham Borough Act 1928] for this, for the purpose of playing fields shall be deemed to be leisure grounds or recreation grounds for the purpose of the local act and under the Public Health Act"? Mr. Marston therefore asked if he could see a map showing what land was acquired in 1928?

The Leader stated that he believed that could be arranged.

Councillor Allen confirmed that the piece of land in question was part of a larger conveyance of land in 1928. With the work that had been done so far, which was not a lot because this was still the start of the journey in terms of development of the area, no restrictive uses of the site had been identified. Councillor Allen did, however, confirm that the information provided by Mr. Marston would be very useful as the Council progressed with those discussions.

2. Councillor Yasseen stated she had concerns regarding the area Mr. Marston had referenced, particularly from her view as a Ward Councillor. She stated that she had grown up and lived in the Ward she now represented, and she knew that there were certain areas that the community felt passionate about. Councillor Yasseen's residents contacted her about this, asked for site visits and wanted to be involved which was one of the big mantras of the Council. They wanted to see positive developments that would benefit the whole community. Herringthorpe Playing Fields and any annexes (the community did not see any of it as annexes but rather one site) were very important to the community and the passion for the site pre-dated Councillor Yasseen as a Councillor. She accepted that there was a

right within the Local Plan to trigger housing development on that site and she did not know the validity of the issues that Mr Marston had raised. However, the issue Councillor Yasseen had was that nobody knew that it was going to be triggered or even that a survey would be undertaken. Green Spaces, Neighbourhoods Officers and other Housing Officers who regularly attended neighbourhood meetings were also unaware. Councillor Yasseen asked how the Council could involve local communities and Ward Councillors at the earliest point, even if was just for information? Councillor Yasseen stated that she had raised her concerns with Strategic Housing but they went ahead anyway and as such, she had received multiple complaints. She hoped that by raising these issues with the Leader of the Council the issues would not be repeated.

Councillor Allen stated that in a response to an email from Councillor Yasseen in the past week, she had confirmed that Housing Officers did go to the Ward Councillor briefing on 12th October, 2023, to indicate that the Council was starting to look at the site along with two others in the Borough. Councillor Allen confirmed that a meeting would be taking place on Friday, 26th January at which she would see the plans. She confirmed that this was very much the earliest point in the development. She had stressed the importance of consultation to officers. The site mentioned in the report at Grayson Road had gone out to Ward Councillors and the local community. Consultation with the community was a statutory requirement of the planning application process. Councillor Allen stated that once she had had the detailed discussions with officers on Friday, she would be very happy to go to the Ward Councillors first to share the plans as they were at that point. Discussions could also be held regarding the consultation process with the community.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen accepted Councillor Allen's offer and stated that it was greatly appreciated. There had been issues previously in relation to Boston Castle and the expansion of the reservoir. Councillor Yasseen stated that the meeting held on 12th October was attended by Housing Officers at her request. They had not planned to attend of their own accord. Councillor Yasseen had asked that no surveys be conducted until after consultation with the local community, especially Friends of Herringthorpe Playing Fields.

Councillor Yasseen was thanked for her question.

3. Ms. Khan asked a question in relation to the 35 year plan for East Herringthorpe Cemetery. Dignity was supposed to have submitted the Plan to the Council in March 2023; this was then pushed back to December 2023. Ms. Khan stated that there had been emails saying the report would now be shared at the end of January 2024. However, there had already been a Scrutiny meeting in January and the report was not provided. Nobody had the relevant information to bring to Scrutiny and it was missing parts of the equalities information. Ms.

Khan stated that this was not good enough; it was 15 years too late. Every time a deadline was provided it was moved further away. The group concerned with East Herringthorpe Cemetery had not been to Cabinet for some time as they thought everything was in hand and being dealt with as it had been brought to the Leader's attention. However, Ms. Khan felt like they were taking one step forward and 10 steps backwards and it was not right.

The Leader stated that his understanding was that the document was imminent and should be available within the next couple of weeks. There would be some more work to do after that.

The Assistant Director of Legal, Elections and Registration Services confirmed that that was correct and that there had been issues with delays. The issues regarding delays had been picked up directly with Dignity through the management of the contract.

In her supplementary, Ms. Khan asked for confirmation that the delay was from Dignity, not the Council.

The Leader confirmed that this was correct.

4. Mr. Sohial stated that January's meeting of the liaison group was cancelled by the Council and had not been re-arranged. He asked when they could expect a date for January's meeting.

Councillor Alam explained that it would be in March 2024.

5. Mr. Hussain explained that he spent most of the day at East Herringthorpe Cemetery and was therefore able to explain what was going on. There were around 50 grave spaces left in the Muslim section which was a major concern for the Muslim community as there was nowhere else to go. Sheffield had over 1,500 grave spaces left and this was creating havoc yet Rotherham only had 50 and nothing was being done about it. Mr. Hussain stated that he did not care about the 35 year plan; he cared about getting grave spaces sorted for Muslims so burials could take place as cremation was not an option. He asked what was happening about it.

Councillor Alam stated that he shared the concerns raised by Mr. Hussain. In the last couple of years there had been a lot of Muslim deaths because of demographic changes so he was concerned that they were fast running out of spaces. The 35 year plan from Dignity should provide the reassurance that Rotherham was not going to run out of spaces. Councillor Alam reassured Mr. Hussain that senior officers were engaging with Dignity. He also stated that the Council needed to look at the expansion because if the rate of deaths from the previous 2 years carried on, there would be a very serious shortage. Councillor Alam did state that the Muslim section needed expanding but consideration also had to be given to the Catholic section, the

children's section etc. to ensure that nobody was excluded. Councillor Alam confirmed that the concerns would be taken to Dignity and reassurance provided as soon as possible.

The Leader again confirmed that the 35 year plan would be shared imminently. The Leader also stressed that the Council would not let East Herringthorpe Cemetery run out of Muslim burial sites. The Council would ensure there were spaces there by doing whatever was required to ensure that the Muslim community could be buried in a dignified way.

Mr. Hussain explained that he saw what was happening in the graveyard every day and it would take time to make it fit for purpose. However, the Muslim community did not have time. The 50 graves would last around 9 months. Mr. Hussain stated that he had seen the 35 year plan and so was confused that the Council had not seen it.

The Leader referred to comments that he had made previously in which he had stated that the Council would ensure there were enough burial sites for the Muslim community and the Plan would be shared over the next few weeks.

6. Mr. Azam asked a question in relation to transparency which he knew the Council valued. However, he stated that answers provided to questions at the current meeting had caused confusion. This related to the Muslim Liaison Bereavement Group. Mr. Azam asked why the full minutes of the meeting that was held in 2023 had not been circulated. He asked if the Council had changed its policy to only issue actions that came out of meetings. This would mean that other discussions were not formally recorded and available for public view.

The Assistant Director of Legal, Elections and Registration Services explained that the point of the meeting was to carry forward actions. Minutes were only usually taken in formal meetings (such as Cabinet) so it was normal procedure for action notes to be taken at the liaison group meeting. He stated that there was a lot of detail in the email exchanges where the Council was on record with almost all of the matters raised. The Assistant Director confirmed that he was happy to pick up any issues that Mr. Azam did not feel reassured on.

In his supplementary question, Mr. Azam stated that the 35 year plan had been submitted and the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board stated that it had been received. However, during the Cabinet meeting it had been stated that it had not been received. Both could not be right. Mr. Azam stated that this was a situation of the Council's own making. He and others had asked multiple times to work with the Council to try and solve these issues, but they were losing patience due to the lack of progress on such a serious matter. At a previous meeting, Mr. Azam had asked a question regarding changes to the medical examiner process but had not been provided with any

information, despite a commitment being made in the meeting to do so. The Plan had been promised multiple times but not shared. The liaison group meetings had been arranged but cancelled. The next meeting was scheduled for April so would the January meeting really be re-arranged for March? He asked why the Council was so difficult to work with.

Councillor Alam explained that the Council was still waiting for information from Government regarding the medical examiner process. A draft schedule had been issued but the guidance had not been received. Councillor Alam had raised concerns with the medical examiner process following the passing of his grandfather and he was adamant that he would make sure it was running smoothly. However, this would require work with partners as the medical examiner role was a statutory role run by the NHS and it would also require input from GPs. Councillor Alam assured Mr. Azam that the Council was trying its best to make sure that the process, from end of life to burial, was correct and inclusive. Officers were working very hard to ensure this would happen.

In relation to the documents, Councillor Alam stated that sometimes Dignity provided documents that were not fit for purpose. For example, the equalities document was sent back 8 times because it was not correct. He also confirmed that the 35 year plan was not just about East Herringthorpe Cemetery but covered all cemeteries in the Borough. As commissioners, it was the job of the Council to push back at Dignity to make sure that the appropriate governance was in place. Operational issues were dealt with by Dignity directly.

The Leader stated that if meetings were being missed and conversations needed to take place, the meetings needed to be re-arranged quickly.

7. Mr. Thorp had attended the previous week's Council meeting and asked a question regarding the cycling lane from Sheffield Road to Wellgate. He had brought 2 documents to the Cabinet meeting, the Do Dutch document and the Cycling Gear Change document and stated that the Council used both. They laid out all the plans for how cycling lanes should be built. The documents stated that they should be built by somebody who cycles and knows the way cyclists cycle and should not include 90 degree turns but have direct routes instead. At the Council meeting, the Leader had said that cycling lanes needed to have kerbs but, in Mr. Thorp's opinion, the most successful cycling/walking scheme that had been done at the cost of £12m was Blackfriars Bridge. He stated that there were no kerbs, just a line and paint that segregated walkers on the pavement and cyclists on the road, then a bus lane and cars. There were no big kerbs because they would take up more space on the road and cause more problems. Mr. Thorp asked why this and the list was not followed in relation to the Sheffield Road cycle lane.

The Leader explained that there were a number of practical issues that faced the Council's Transport Team as they designed the schemes. Decisions had to be taken based on the guidance as mentioned in the Council meeting, the Department for Transport best practice and available funding, resources and land. The Leader confirmed that if there were particular elements of the design that Mr. Thorp wanted raising with the Transport Team, he was happy to do so but he was not able to talk through each of those points in the meeting.

The Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport confirmed that it was important that the Council was constructing cycling infrastructure in accordance with the guidance. There was a range of guidance available, such as from the Department for Transport but there was also guidance related to the funding which was from the Transforming Cities Fund. This funding flowed through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and it was important to achieve a level of consistency in the approach on a regional basis.

In his supplementary, Mr. Thorp stated that one of the biggest things he was bothered by was that at the end of the process, the finished schemes were going to be checked and if they were not found to be compliant, the Council would be asked to pay back the money. Mr. Thorp asked what would happen if that was the case. Where would Rotherham get the money?

The Leader explained that the reason processes such as the ones in place for the cycle lanes were followed was to avoid that happening. It was a standard clawback clause that was in a lot of schemes that were grant funded. In the worst case scenario, the Council would become liable for that, but the Council went through a long assurance process to make sure that that would not happen. At every stage the scheme was checked to make sure it was compliant with the fund's rules. The Leader again stated that he would provide a written response regarding the specifics of the scheme.

8. Councillor Reynolds asked what soft and hard launch was planned for the Forge Island development. Were plans in place? How well advanced were the plans? What were the immediate short and long term marketing plans for the whole project and when would these be available?

The Leader stated that the plans had not been announced yet, but Forge Island was a commercial site run by commercial operators. Those operators had set aside funding for promotional activities, early launch, advertising etc. This would lie largely in their responsibility as commercial businesses.

The Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment explained that, when doing developments of this nature, often marketing and promotion were done in order to get the end users there. In this case,

they were already signed up. When it opened, the site would be full. There would be the cinema, the hotel and food and drink premises. It was now the job of the Council to work alongside the operators in terms of fit-out plans and the launch of the individual businesses on a collective basis. The Council was already on with that. For example, the Topping Out was reported in the press. Topping Out was a construction term for when a building was completed in terms of its structure. A photograph was taken on top of the hotel and included representative from Arc Cinema. The ultimate aim was for the public to use the site and for it to be a success.

In his supplementary, Councillor Reynolds stated that he was glad to hear that marketing was on the agenda. However, he stated that the point of marketing was to create a buzz and excitement around the opening, and, in his opinion, there was currently very little. He asked where the overarching picture was that this was the big package for Rotherham's renaissance. He said it was all well involving experts and letting the premises but what about the public who had to come and access the services and pay for them to make them a success? Councillor Reynold's stated that surely that was who the Council should be preaching to in order to build the tension. He asked why this was not started a year ago and stated that it seemed like it had been forgotten.

The Leader stated that it had not been forgotten. The focus had been on making sure the development was in place, the commercial partners were in place and the building was on track and on budget. Over the coming months, led by those commercial organisations, the marketing would be taking place and the Council would be supporting that. The Leader stated his belief that people would be excited by the time the development was open.

118. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18th December, 2023, be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings subject to two clerical corrections.

119. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that Appendix 5 to Minute No. 126, contained exempt information, however, the meeting remained open to the public and press throughout.

120. ADULT SOCIAL CARE STRATEGY FOR ROTHERHAM 2024-27

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the new Rotherham Adult Social Care Strategy (2024-2027) which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. In April 2023, Cabinet had given approval to refresh the Council's strategy for Adult Social Care. A 3 months consultation period with key stakeholders on the future vision, values, themes and priorities had followed. The report detailed the outcomes of this consultation, and an analysis of the consultation was included at Appendix 2 to the report.

55% of the respondents to the consultation felt that the new vision for Adult Social Care should be to "enable every resident with care and support needs to live their best lives, with the people they value, close to home and with access to the right support at the right time." Respondents had also fed back regarding what the Council should consider when delivering the new vision. Details of these were included at paragraph 2.3 of the report. This feedback had been incorporated into the "Our Priorities" section of the Strategy.

There had been a focus throughout the new Strategy on simplifying language to ensure it was fully accessible. The Strategy had been designed into sections, with simpler language and with clear outcomes to ensure action could be measured and quantifiable over the next 3 year term.

In addition, the Council's Adult Social Care Service wanted to ensure a stronger voice in co-producing and co-designing services. 24% of respondents indicated that they wanted to get involved in a new Co-production Panel for Adult Social Care. The Service was currently developing the approach and it was intended to launch the Panel in early 2024. Progress on delivering the priorities would be reported to Cabinet annually as part of the Local Account for Adult Social Care – 'How Did We Do?' report.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approve the Rotherham Adult Social Care Strategy (2024 –2027.)

121. DIGITALISATION OF THE ROTHERCARE SERVICE

Consideration was given to the report which set out the proposals for the digitalisation of the Rothercare Service. Rothercare provided an alarm service, connected to a 24-hour call centre, that created a route to rapid assistance in an emergency. The service was available to all adult residents of Rotherham, regardless of tenure type, age, or level of disability or frailty. The service operated a 24-hour specialist call centre and mobile responder unit which provided lifeline support to some of Rotherham's most vulnerable and isolated residents. The service also

provided and distributed low level assistive technology equipment including fall detectors, clocks and medication dispensers, that had been identified to support or maintain independence. The service supported 6,911 customers in 5,646 properties. This equated to 2,845 private properties and 2,801 local authority properties.

Nationally, the Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) would close in December 2025. By then, every phone line in the United Kingdom would have moved to a fully digital network that used Internet Protocol (IP) across a fibre-based service, seeing the traditional analogue PSTN lines decommissioned and replaced by a fully digital infrastructure. This had substantially impacted Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC's) such as Rothercare. Rothercare had already issued 1,647 digital units, leaving a further 4,279 units to be deployed.

The PSTN infrastructure change would impact on both service delivery and cost and was the key driver to design a new business delivery model, based around customer choice and requirements. The model would consider the continual development of technology, resources and cost. The Council had carried out a 90-day public consultation which would support the development of a new business model going forward, taking into account people's thoughts and preferences, both in relation to service delivery and service charges.

Details of the consultation were set out in paragraphs 1.3.10 – 1.3.23 of the report. The key message throughout responses received was that Rothercare provided an excellent service which was respected and valued, giving peace of mind and reassurance to support people to live independently in their own homes across the Borough. People also commented that the service provided excellent value for money. The full comments were included at Appendix 1.

The financial impact of this project would leave the Council with an additional £1.7M funding requirement for the purchase and installation of the equipment. There was also a recurring annual revenue pressure of £381,000 relating to sim card rentals which could not be met by the service in the long term as the current Rothercare charge of £3.29 per week was insufficient to generate the income needed to fund the ongoing costs associated with the digital switchover.

A further report would be presented in the summer of 2024 detailing the new strategic approach to assistive technology and the business delivery model for the digitalised Rothercare service.

During the meeting Councillor Roche explained that the charge for Rothercare was the lowest in the region and that there was no charge for installation.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:-

1. Notes the outcome of the 90-day consultation exercise.
2. Notes the requirements of the national closure of the Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) and the impact on Rothercare.
3. Approves £1.7M capital investment funding to enable the purchase and installation of the new digital units, subject to approval of the Budget at Cabinet and Council in February 2024.
4. Approves the procurement of an external provider to complete the installations for the digital switchover to enable Rothercare to maintain its current standards of service level and quality throughout the transition process.
5. Agrees to receive a further report in the summer of 2024 detailing a new strategic approach to assistive technology and the business delivery model for a digitalised Rothercare service.

122. CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Corporate Parenting Strategy for approval. The Strategy set out the priorities for children and young people and outlined improvements to services and practices for children who were Looked After or had care experience. There were currently 509 children in care and 323 care leavers in Rotherham, with some overlapping between the 2 groups (due to young people being considered care leavers aged 16). These children and young people had a range of needs and experiences and lived in a variety of placements, suited to their needs. As such the Strategy had to outline priorities which met the needs of all children in care and care leavers and determine how these needs could be met over the next 3 years. The priorities for the Strategy were set out in paragraph 1.5 of the report.

The previous Strategy (Children in Care and Care Leavers Strategy) was published in 2017. The key achievements of the previous Strategy were:

- Improved placement sufficiency through the residential transformation programme and the fostering plan.
- Improved stability of placements for children in care.
- Destination and permanence planning for children in care.
- Stability of the workforce.

As part of the development of the oversight of the Service, evaluation of other local authority services (for example, Hertfordshire County Council and Leeds City Council) had suggested that the Corporate Parenting Panel be reconstituted as a Board, with external partners involved, in the

new Municipal Year. This would reinforce the importance of the wider partnership across the Borough to support vulnerable children and young people and provide the collective leadership required to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers. Partners provided the additional commitment to children in care and care leavers that a parent who was ambitious for their children would make, and it was important to continue to build upon this. It would also ensure that detailed discussions took place with Members about a range of confidential issues, including placements and direct service delivery.

The Board would continue to be chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services with a cross party group of Members invited to attend the meetings. Membership would also include key corporate leads across all services relevant to children in care and care leavers, as well as health and education representatives. In order to facilitate the full attendance of children and young people, representatives would be restricted to attendees and documents would not be made public. It was essential to ensure that the voice of children in care and care leavers was heard clearly and in a way that ensured they genuinely influenced the development of policy and strategy moving forward. To ensure proper scrutiny continued for this important area of work, it was recommended that the Board report formally annually to Council and to the Improving Lives Select Commission.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Corporate Parenting Strategy and approve the three-year plan as set out within the Strategy.
2. Note the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to Chair and convene the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.
3. Approve the Governance Arrangements for the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board and delegate authority to the Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Chief Executive and Assistant Director of Legal Services to amend the Terms of Reference.

123. NEGLECT STRATEGY 2024 - 26

Consideration was given to the report which introduced the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026 which was attached as Appendix 1. This was a partnership strategy and was governed by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP.) It was owned by the Neglect Delivery Group which reported directly to the RSCP Executive Partnership Group.

Neglect was defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children as "the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse." Neglect accounted for 40% (151 children) of Rotherham's Child Protection Plans, second to emotional abuse at 51% (as of 31st October 2023). These statistics were also reflected in the Children in Need cohorts, and Early Help. By tackling neglect at the earliest opportunity, the aim was to prevent the situation deteriorating to requiring statutory intervention. Whilst neglect could be a one-off incident (home alone for example) it rarely was. It was an ongoing situation that could be subtly getting progressively worse, but often making it difficult to identify.

The Neglect Strategy 2024 – 2026 had been developed in line with legislation and guidance. The NSPCC research and assessment tool, Graded Care Profile 2, had also been considered. Derived from academic, sector and local research around neglect, the Strategy had three priorities:

- Recognise
- Respond
- Make a Difference

The aim was to use research alongside current data and local case studies and examples to drive the Strategy action plan. The Strategy provided clarity on neglect type and signs, roles, and responsibilities of key partner agencies, how they would work together to deliver the key priorities and how success was measured.

A review of the partnership arrangements and delivery groups was undertaken in 2023. This was following the recruitment of an independent scrutineer to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive group. Darren Downs joined the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership in spring 2023. This role was similar to the previous Chair role, however, added a greater emphasis on scrutineer of the partnership arrangements and safeguarding arrangements. The previous arrangements were set out in paragraph 2.4.4 of the report and the new arrangements at 2.4.5

During the meeting, the Leader, Cabinet Member and Darren Downs agreed that neglect was one of the most common, serious forms of child abuse but sometimes went under the radar. The sheer volume of the problem meant it required the attention of the Council and its partners. It was noted by officers that the COVID-19 Pandemic had led to a generation of "hidden children." Some had not started or returned to school since the lifting of restrictions, and many were not registered with doctors or other health care professionals. In the most extreme of circumstances, neglect could kill, and it was therefore vital that the Strategy was implemented.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet endorse the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026.
2. That Cabinet approve the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Partnership Strategy Delivery Plan and the oversight of progress by; the Neglect Delivery Group, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC).

124. NOVEMBER 2023-24 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which set out the financial position as at the end of November 2023 and forecast for the remainder of the financial year, based on actual costs and income for the first 8 months of 2023/24. As at November 2023, the Council Directorates currently estimated an overspend of £9.6m for the financial year 2023/24. This was largely due to demand-led pressures on Children's residential placements and home to school transport as well as the impact of inflationary pressures on the economy, particularly on food prices, and the legacy impact of lockdown restrictions on some Directorate's services, especially in Regeneration and Environment.

This was, however, offset by a £5m corporate budget risk contingency held within Central Services, approved within the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24. In addition, the Council was now able to report further savings from the Council's Treasury Management Strategy of £3.5m, taken together, this £8.5m reported underspend in Central Services reduced the Council's overall forecast outturn to a £1.1m overspend.

The current economic climate remained turbulent, with challenges in projecting where inflation would move and the pace at which it moved. Inflation was slowing although there were variances below the headline rate: food prices were starting to fall while petrol and diesel prices were increasing. The overall reduction would help support the Council's Budget for 2023/24 but the position would be closely monitored.

There remained funding uncertainty for the local government sector beyond 2023/24 and 2024/25 as the Local Government Financial Settlement had been only a one-year allocation for both these years. The Council would continue to face significant challenges moving forwards in regard to the funding of Social Care. This was best illustrated by the volume of Local Authorities across the UK that had recently hit difficult times with a number having to issue S114 notices.

Although inflation appeared to be easing, the Local Government Association (LGA) Pay Award had been agreed and the full financial impact was £4m greater than was assumed within the Budget for 2023/24. However, the majority of this was covered by the in-year savings within Treasury Management.

The Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services confirmed that officers continued to work hard to reduce the £1.1m overspend. Councillor Roche praised the Finance Team and Councillor Alam for their management of the budget during difficult times.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £1.1m.
2. Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2023/24 financial position.

125. HOUSING DELIVERY PROGRAMME REPORT 2024-25

Consideration was given to the report which set out the proposals in relation to the Housing Delivery Programme 2024-25. These proposals would continue to support the delivery of hundreds of new Council homes by March 2026, through a combination of development on Council-owned land and the acquisition of homes from the private sector. Appendix 3 provided a list of sites proposed for development, including several further sites held within the Council's General Fund, details of which were at Appendix 4. Exempt Appendix 5 provided a list of potential acquisition opportunities.

Cabinet was also asked to note that the East Herringthorpe Small Sites scheme was now delivering against the principles of the 2019 Cabinet report "Delivery of 12 Bungalows using Modern Methods of Construction".

From January 2018 to November 2023, the Council had successfully delivered 505 affordable homes; 379 homes for rent and 126 homes for shared ownership:

385 of these homes had been delivered through Council-led construction.

16 homes had resulted from conversion of existing Council assets into new homes, and 104 were from the acquisition of homes from private developers and the open market.

The Council had also built 125 new homes for market sale. A photographic summary of delivery achieved during this period was provided in Appendix 2. Further progress was outlined at paragraph 1.5 of the report.

To retain alignment with the principles of the 2019 approval, 2 of the sites, Hounsfeld Crescent and Hounsfeld Road, were subsequently brought into the East Herringthorpe Small Sites development, approved by Cabinet in September 2020. These sites were now in build and would deliver 2, two-bed bungalows along with a four-bed Wheelchair User Dwelling, with 10 homes being built in total utilising Modern Methods of Construction (MMC.) The original Symonds Avenue site remained in the programme but only a smaller section was developable. Cabinet was therefore asked to note that the East Herringthorpe Small Sites scheme was now delivering against principles of the “MMC Bungalows” proposals, and that the associated MMC Bungalows budget provision would be allocated back to the wider programme to support Council delivery on other sites. The MMC Bungalows budget included a provision for grant funding, therefore, the net value of monies to be directly re-allocated back into the programme would be lower than the budget.

During the meeting Councillor Allen expressed her pride in the Housing Delivery Programme. The Programme had delivered 630 homes to date, included a mixed portfolio of excellent quality homes that were of different sizes and tenures. There continued to be a very high demand for Council housing and the Right To Buy Scheme continued to erode the housing stock. However, one home had recently been bought back under the Right To Buy – Right of First Refusal scheme. Councillor Allen also explained that, through the Housing Development Programme, the Council aimed to have delivered around 1,000 new homes by March 2026.

Councillor Cusworth noted the amazing progress and stated she was very proud of the housing being provided.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the Council-owned sites listed in Appendix 3 being brought forward to deliver new Council homes.
2. Approves the appropriation of specified General Fund sites to the Housing Revenue Account. Further detail about the sites proposed for appropriation is provided in Appendix 4.
3. Approves the purchase of homes from any of the schemes identified in Exempt Appendix 5.

4. Notes that authority to purchase up to 100 homes from the market has been delegated to the Assistant Director for Housing following approval of the Housing Acquisitions Policy Cabinet report on 16th October, 2023. The 100 homes provision was now reflected in Exempt Appendix 5.
5. Notes that the East Herringthorpe Small Sites scheme was now delivering the principles of the January 2019 Cabinet report “Delivery of 12 Bungalows using Modern Methods of Construction” and approve that the associated budget allocation is allocated back to the wider housing delivery programme to support Council delivery on other sites.
6. Agrees to continue to receive an update on the housing development programme every 6 months.

126. HRA BUSINESS PLAN, RENT SETTING CHARGES 2024-25

Consideration was given to the report which, alongside providing the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2024/25, recommended proposed changes in housing rents, non-dwelling rents, District Heating charges and other service charges. Cabinet were asked to recommend to Council that Council dwelling rent be increased by 7.7%

The proposed 2024/25 HRA Business Plan made funding provision of £126m for hundreds more Council homes by 2026 and committed £856m to investment in the housing stock, alongside day-to-day housing management and repairs and maintenance costs. Over the short to medium term forecast, the Business Plan was operating at or around the minimum balance, with a small surplus of £9.432m by Year 30 of the Business Plan period. However, it was likely that investment in decency and energy efficiency would need to increase over the coming years: the Business Plan made provision for enhanced stock condition surveys which would support future investment decisions.

The overall position remained challenging. Substantial inflationary pressures were evident in some costs increasing by more than 15% over the last 2 years, pressures felt most acutely in the Housing Delivery Programme. The Government’s decision to limit rent increases in 2022/23 led to a permanent reduction of financial capacity within the Business Plan. It was likely that investment in the quality and energy efficiency of the Council stock would need to be increased over the coming years, putting further strain on the Business Plan. At the same time, the Council wished to support tenants to manage their finances during a cost-of-living crisis, recognising that housing costs were often the largest single financial outgoing residents faced.

The Government’s rent setting policy allowed social housing providers to increase rents by Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) plus 1%, i.e. 7.7% in 2024-25. Around two-thirds of tenants in Rotherham were in receipt of

Housing Benefit or Universal Credit which would wholly or partially cover their rent. Given the rate of inflation in 2023-24, a one-off rent cap was introduced for one year and was set at 7%, which the Council followed. The housing rent options and their impact on the HRA Business Plan were set out in paragraph 2.9 to 2.12 of the report.

It was also proposed to increase HRA non-dwelling rent fees and charges for 2024/25 by 6%. This was detailed in Appendix 4 to the report. In relation to District Heating Charges, it was recommended that the Council match the Ofgem Price Cap January to March 2024. This option would see a reduction in the unit rate to 15.27 pence per kwh and would mean an average annual cost per user of £960. There would be an average deficit of £280 per user as full cost recovery would not be achieved. This would mean the HRA would be paying c£353k in 2024/25 towards the cost of District Heating. This was c£1m lower than the contribution in 2023/24 would have been had the Council not received EBDS income.

The challenges of increasing rent were acknowledged, and a number of support measures were set out in the report, starting at paragraph 2.25.7. These included the RMBC Tenancy Support Service; Age UK Age Related Benefit Advisory Service; the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Fund; Employment Solutions; the Council's Energy Crisis Support Fund; the Council's Advocacy and Appeals Team; Foodbanks; the Social Supermarket; Rotherfed and Citizens Advice Rotherham.

The Assistant Director of Housing stated that some of the figures in Appendix 3 to the report were incorrect. The correct figures were provided to the Clerk and would be published as a supplementary document to the agenda. The figures specifically related to the Capital Repairs and Maintenance Investment – excluding savings required and the reserves section of the appendix.

Appendix 1 was the HRA Operating Statement. Appendix 2 related to the rent payable by number of bedrooms. Appendix 3 was the HRA Business Planning assumptions and Appendix 4 was a summary of Modelled Business Plan Scenarios. Non-dwelling rent, service charges and furnished home charges for 2024/25 were attached as Appendix 5 with the HRA Budget 2024/25 at Appendix 6. The affordability analysis was attached at Appendix 7.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), who advised that the recommendations be supported. The Board particularly supported the details of support in the report. They had also been reassured that these details were shared widely through a number of different methods, not just digitally.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommends to Council to:

1. Approve the proposed 2024-25 Base Case Option C for the HRA Business Plan.
2. Note that the Business Plan will be reviewed annually to provide an updated financial position.
3. Agree that Council dwelling rents are increased by 7.7% in 2024/25 (Option 3).
4. Agree that the Council should retain the policy of realigning rents on properties at below formula rent to the formula rent level when the property is re-let to a new tenant.
5. Agree that shared ownership rents are increased by 9.4% in 2024/25.
6. Agree that charges for garages and parking spaces, communal facilities, cooking gas and use of laundry facilities are increased by 6% in 2024/25.
7. Agree that the District Heating unit charge per Kwh is set at 15.27 pence per kwh, a decrease of 4.2% (0.67 pence per kwh).
8. Agrees that the decision to reduce the price of District Heating Charges further during 2024-25 be delegated to the Assistant Director of Housing in conjunction with the Assistant Director of Financial Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing. The delegation would only be used to respond to a change in Government policy or a significant change in the Ofgem price cap that has the effect of necessitating a lower unit price.
9. Approve the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2024/25 as shown in Appendix 6.

127. PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION SCHEME (PSDS) GRANT FUNDED DECARBONISATION WORKS

Consideration was given to the report which summarised the proposed approach to improving the energy efficiency and decarbonisation of 8 Council buildings. This included works to install a low carbon heat source utilising funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) and the allocated Council Decarbonisation Capital budget.

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in October 2019 and a Climate Emergency Action Plan had been established. The policy and technological context of net zero was rapidly changing, and delivery of an

annual action plan allowed opportunities to be leveraged before they were missed. The Government had invested funding (the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS)) to assist with the decarbonisation of public buildings, and this report had been brought forward in order to seek approval to proposals which utilises the PSDS funding that would be invested in decarbonisation measures within Government allocated spending timeframes.

A significant challenge in delivering the Council's Climate Change Action Plan was the reduction in carbon emissions from the Council buildings that were a product of current gas energy supply. In order to consider how it might tackle this challenge, the Council had approved, as part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2022/23, a capital investment to begin to decarbonise its buildings. This capital investment was used as a match funding requirement to enable the Council to secure external PSDS funding. The Council proposed to explore opportunities to replace the gas boilers within a number of the existing operational buildings.

A summary of the decarbonisation interactions and calculated/estimated data was at Appendix 1 'PSDS Phase 3C Works'. The buildings identified for the funding included:

- Kimberworth Place.
- Matrix Dinnington Business Centre.
- Swinton Civic Hall.
- Oaks Lane Depot.
- Boston Castle.
- Hellaby Depot – Denby.
- Hellaby Depot – Sandbeck.
- Century 1 Business Centre.

Decarbonisation site surveys had been carried out at each site listed above to identify decarbonisation measures, calculate energy/carbon savings, potential savings and estimated project costs. The reports had been used as evidence to support PSDS applications for each building.

The proposed works and low carbon heating system would significantly reduce the Council's overall carbon impact through the improvements set out in the table at paragraph 2.4 of the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the use of grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, if successful, and a contribution from the existing Council capital decarbonisation to deliver the proposed works to the Council's operational property, as set out at paragraph 2.4 of this report.

2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Financial Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Local Economy to agree Air Source Heat connection contracts at each of the buildings as set out in paragraph 2.4 of this report.

128. LOCAL LABOUR POLICY - PLANNING

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to adopt the Local Labour Policy Interim Policy Statement. This Policy would set out the requirements for major and/or employment generating development entering into Local Labour Agreements, increasing the opportunities for local people to access training and local employment.

Rotherham's Local Plan provided the framework for determining planning applications. Core Strategy Policy CS10 'Improving Skills and Employment Opportunities' set out how the Council would work with partners to promote education, training and local employment opportunities. The purpose of the Local Labour Policy Interim Policy Statement (IPS) was to provide guidance on how Policy CS10 would be implemented by requiring developers to enter into Local Labour Agreements through planning conditions. Once adopted, it would be a material consideration which could be taken into account when determining planning applications.

The Council was looking for new major developments or where development would result in the creation of 15 or more new full-time jobs, to contribute through the provision of new local jobs, education and training opportunities where this was appropriate and viable. It was recognised that these could include opportunities both during the construction phase of development through to eventual occupiers.

Two different planning conditions could be used and, depending on the nature and scale of development, one or both could be imposed when granting planning permission. Those requirements would also be highlighted as part of any pre-application discussions on major schemes. The first condition related to the submission of a scheme to show the use of local labour during the construction phase for Major Developments. The second condition related to the use of Local Labour in the operational development for Major schemes. This would only be relevant where there was employment generated as a part of the application, such as, retail, office, major industrial developments etc.

During the meeting Councillor Lelliott confirmed that this had been one of the commitments made by the Labour Group in their manifesto in 2021.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet adopts the Local Labour Policy Interim Policy Statement.

129. HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE INCREASE

Consideration was given to the report which explained that a representation had been received on behalf of members of the Rotherham Hackney Carriage Association requesting a rise in the metered fares currently being charged by Hackney Carriages in Rotherham. In addition, the Association was requesting changes to the times that the different tariffs were applied, along with an increase in the soiling charge that must be paid by the passenger if the vehicle was fouled (for example, spilled food or drink).

The tariffs were set by the Council in accordance with Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976. This was an executive function and must therefore be exercised by Cabinet.

The current tariffs were set in 2022. Since this time, the costs associated with running a licensed vehicle had increased. Licence holders were therefore requesting this increase to cover running costs and allow them to see sufficient return for their business. The current and recommended tariffs were detailed in Appendix 1.

In relation to Tariff 1 (Standard), the current charge for the first mile was £4.50, with each additional mile costing the passenger £1.50. The proposals were for this to increase to £4.80 for the first mile (an increase of 6.7%), and £1.70 for each additional mile thereafter (an increase of approximately 13%). In addition, it was proposed that the charge for waiting was increased from 20p per minute (or part thereof) to 30p per minute (or part thereof). This represented an increase of 50%.

In relation to Tariff 2 (Night-time, Sunday and Bank Holidays), the current charge for the first mile was £4.70, with each additional mile costing the passenger £1.70. The proposals were for this to increase to £5.10 for the first mile (an increase of 8.5%), and £1.90 for each additional mile thereafter (an increase of 11.8%). It was also proposed that the times during which Tariff 2 was applicable should be changed as detailed in paragraphs 2.15 and 2.16 of the report.

In relation to Tariff 3 (Christmas and New Year,) the current charge for the first mile was £7.00, with each additional mile costing the passenger £1.90. The proposals were for this to increase to £7.30 for the first mile (an increase of 4.3%), and £2.20 for each additional mile thereafter (an increase of 15.8%).

Appendix 2 to the report outlined the Hackney Carriage Tariff Comparison Information.

Rotherham Hackney Carriage Association were representative of the Hackney Carriage Trade in Rotherham and had been fully involved in the development of the proposed tariffs. There was a statutory 14-day consultation period which had to take place prior to the introduction of the

proposed tariffs. The Council was required to place a notice in the local press allowing no less than 14 days for comments regarding the proposed tariffs to be submitted to the Council. Should any objections be received then these would need to be considered in accordance with the procedure detailed above. If no objections were received (or objections were made but subsequently withdrawn) the revised tariffs would come into effect at a date to be determined by the Council in liaison with the trade.

Resolved:

1. That the amendments to the Hackney Carriage tariffs and soiling charge detailed in this report and Appendix 1 be approved along with a 14-day consultation period.
2. That following the period of consultation, if no objections are received or any objections received are subsequently withdrawn, then the amended tariffs and soiling charge are to take effect immediately.
3. Should any objections be received following the period of consultation then a further report will be presented to Cabinet to determine whether the fares should be agreed and introduced or amended prior to their introduction.

130. MID-YEAR COUNCIL PLAN 2022-25 AND YEAR AHEAD DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the progress made on the activities in the Year Ahead Delivery Plan as well as the Council Plan. The Council Plan set out the outcomes that the Council would work towards over the period from 2022 to 2025. There were 26 outcomes and 47 commitments in total. To ensure delivery against these, the Year Ahead Delivery Plan included 98 priority actions/milestones to mostly be delivered by March 2024.

The Council Plan was being monitored through both the delivery of the milestones and activities within the Year Ahead Delivery Plan and the 68 performance measures outlined in the Council Plan. The performance measures included a mixture of output measures and longer-term outcome measures.

The mid-year progress report (Appendix 1) focused on the progress made across all the Year Ahead Delivery Plan activities to deliver the 5 headline priorities for Rotherham as set out in the Council Plan for 2022-25. The report had been designed to ensure that progress on the Year Ahead Delivery Plan activities was as up to date as possible up to the time of publication.

As of 30th November, 2023, the activities within the Year Ahead Delivery Plan were rated as follows:

- 33% (32) complete
- 49% (48) are on track to be delivered by original target date
- 10% (10) are delayed by less than 3 months
- 8% (8) will not be met within 3 months of original target date

During the meeting, each Cabinet Member gave a verbal report on progress within their portfolio:

Neighbourhood Working and Housing – Councillor Allen referenced the *Every Neighbourhood Thriving* theme, specifically the *Local Towns and Villages are improved* outcome. The status of this was *Known Delays*. However, 10 projects within Round 1 had been delivered. 22 projects were to be delivered by March 2024. A further 3 schemes were on site and 4 were ready to commence. Councillor Allen noted that the scheme for Aston and Todwick had not yet received Member approval. There were issues with the scheme in Brinsworth due to private ownership issues with land. In relation to the *People Are Safe, Health and Live Well* theme, it was confirmed that the 3 housing measures (2.10 (a), (b) and (c)) would not be met within the given timeframe but would be commenced by Quarter 3 2024/25. The achievements for the 2 themes were set out at pages 475 to 478 of the agenda pack.

Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance – Councillor Alam highlighted the *deliver a communications campaign to promote access to enforcement services, such as the out of hours team, and establish a robust performance management framework for the services* outcome. This was on track and the Service continued to promote outcomes via social media and press releases. Work was also being done to work with services, partners and communities to promote equality, celebrate diversity and ensure fairness for everyone. Councillor Alam also highlighted the employee engagement survey and the manager development programme.

Social Inclusion and Environment – Councillor Sheppard highlighted those outcomes that were at risk or delay. This included the restoration of Waterloo Kiln which was delayed in order to allow for better weather conditions. The masterplans at both Thrybergh and Rother Valley Country Parks were progressing but behind schedule. The delayed designs and costings were due to a further analysis of the components and materials, the full outcome of which would not be known until January 2024. Positives included the procurement of a new Household Waste Recycling Service which commenced in October 2023. The new contract provided a number of benefits. The pilot for a commercial Waste Recycling Service had been completed and was to be rolled out to all existing customers, both internal and external. Further, work had been completed at Thurcroft Library which was a great community asset. A great number of events had taken place and the Signal Music Festival was scheduled for February 2024 half term. Work was also continuing on the commitment to become the first Children's Capital of Culture in 2025.

Jobs and the Local Economy – Councillor Lelliott highlighted that the number of new businesses started with help from the Council was off track. In Swinton, the Civic Hall had been refurbished and work on the new library and neighbourhood hub had begun after roof leaks caused delays. It was expected to be finished by the end of March, with demolition of the old library following in 2024/25. Councillor Lelliott also highlighted the positive news that the Century 2 business incubation hub had officially opened. In the town centre, initial works for the markets and library redevelopment were underway and the flagship leisure development at Forge Island was on track for completion by April. The Riverside Gardens scheme was delayed after a procurement exercise failed to award a contract. Construction would now begin in the next financial year.

Children and Young People – Councillor Cusworth explained that the Council was continuing with the development of residential homes, so children in care and young people in Rotherham could remain in the Borough. Whilst some delays had arisen due to registrations and challenges with access permissions to the properties, all 4 two-bedroom homes were still due to open by Quarter 4. On a positive, the number of Children in Need had reduced further. The number of children with a Child Protection Plan remained on target and the number of Children in Care had continued to reduce. Councillor Cusworth also confirmed that the phonics screening test results were above the national average.

Adult Social Care and Health – Councillor Roche confirmed that an average of 96.3% of all adults involved in a safeguarding enquiry felt that their personal outcomes were being met. This was well above the national average. The proportion of those people following reablement with no further requests for support continued to perform well and exceed the Council Plan target and comparative data from 2022/23 Quarter 2. The new Alcohol and Drugs Services contract had started in April 2023 and was performing well. The ‘Say Yes’ campaign, a new public health improvement and prevention campaign providing advice on areas such as smoking, tobacco control, food and physical activity had launched in June 2023 on social media and on RotherHive. Further, Councillor Roche confirmed that Rotherham was now officially recognised as a Breastfeeding Friendly Borough. The building groundwork for Castle View was on track.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), who advised that the recommendations be supported. The Board appreciated the honesty regarding delays.

Resolved:

That Cabinet note:

1. The overall position in relation to the Year Ahead Delivery Plan activities.
2. The Quarter 2 2022-23 data for the Council Plan performance measures.
3. The performance reporting timetable for the remainder of the 2023-2024 year.

131. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Consideration was given to the circulated report, the contents of which were included as part of the relevant items and the details included accordingly.

132. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on Monday, 12th February 2024, commencing at 10.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.