

**COUNCIL MEETING  
19th July, 2023**

Present:- Councillor Robert Taylor (in the Chair); Councillors Cowen, Alam, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, Brookes, Browne, A Carter, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clark, Z. Collingham, Cooksey, Cusworth, Elliott, Ellis, Fisher, Foster, Griffin, Haleem, Hall, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Miro, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Roche, Sansome, Sheppard, Tarmey, Thompson, Tinsley, Whomersley, Wyatt and Yasseen.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**1. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor asked members to join him in welcoming Councillor Hall to the Chamber and her first Council meeting as the newly elected Member for Dinnington following last week's By Election.

He was pleased to be able to welcome to the meeting, officers representing the winners of the LGC Public-Public Partnership Award for "Walk with Us" – A Toolkit for Supporting Children, Young People and Families affected or bereaved by Suicide to accept the award.

He was also pleased to invite officers to the meeting as winners of the Social Value: Public Sector Leadership Award. The award demonstrated the Council are leading the way in embedding social value into its business culture, processes and systems to ensure the needs of our communities are being met.

The Mayor was also delighted to hear that Rotherham MCVC had been awarded the prestigious 'Silver' status as part of the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme. The Rotherham MCVC volunteers should be rightly proud of this fantastic news, it was a very well deserved and suitable recognition for the significant difference their hard work has made to the military community.

The Mayor held a round of applause to congratulate all the award winners.

The Mayor expressed his sadness to be informed of the passing of Mr Frank Wells, former President of the Rotherham Branch of the Royal British Legion.

Frank who served as a Royal Air Force Policeman and was Chair of the Royal Air Forces Association, originally moved to Rotherham from Wales to work for a local business and was also a Church Warden but he would always be remembered as a very active and long-standing figure in our Armed Forces Community and he had been a pivotal part of armed

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forces civic events – ever present at our town’s Remembrance Sunday Parades and Services and Armed Forces Day. Only last year after proudly performing the raising and lowering Mr Wells was presented with the Armed Forces Day flag by the former Mayor. To Frank’s son Russell and his Family, our thoughts were with you during that difficult time.

He was also very saddened to be informed of the untimely death of the former Vice Lord-Lieutenant of South Yorkshire, John Raymond Holt on Tuesday 30 May. He attended the service held for John at Doncaster Minster, the numbers in attendance, the heartfelt eulogies, and the sheer emotion evident were indicators of the regard in which he was held and how much he would be missed. The Council’s sincerest condolences went to John’s wife Lynn and his family.

The Mayor noted that since our last meeting in May his Mayoral diary has been extremely busy. Notably, he was honoured to lead Rotherham’s Armed Forces Day celebrations. The sheer number and variety of invitations was incredible, as were the universal warm welcomes he had received from organisations and groups, large and small, including from members across this chamber, he thanked them all.

His diary was filling up nicely and he looked forward to providing a further update on his activities at the next Council Meeting in October.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Resolved: That apologies for absence were received from Councillors Aveyard, Barker, Burnett, T Collingham, Mills, and Wilson.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 April 2023, be approved.

### **4. PETITIONS**

The Mayor introduced the report and confirmed the receipt of 2 petitions received since the last Council meeting:

- Containing 112 signatures calling on the Council to consider speeding and overweight vehicles, Brampton Road.
- Containing 213 signatures calling on the Council to consider a pedestrian crossing near Elmwood Farm public house roundabout on A57.

The lead petitioners for the two petitions, Mr Andy Robinson and Mr Liam Fletcher both attended the meeting and presented their petitions to Council.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the Council receive the petitions listed at paragraph 2.1 of the report and the lead petitioners be entitled to address the Council for a total period of five minutes in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme.
3. That the relevant Strategic Directors be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday 2 August 2023.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Question 1: Saghir Hussain asked since when has RMBC been aware of flooding of the graves at the Muslim section of herringthope cemetery and what intervention have been undertaken by RMBC before Dignity takeover.

Councillor Alam responded indicating the Dignity became contractually responsible for the Council's cemeteries in 2008. The records prior to the Dignity contract were incomplete as it was 15 years ago and well before he was first elected, therefore he could not comment on what might have happened at the time.

He went on to explain that in October 2020 Dignity commissioned Clancy Consulting Limited to carry out a full investigation into these matter in October 2020. The report said "*The ground water measured was not thought to be representative of a consistent shallow groundwater body and was more likely to represent discontinuous perched groundwater*". Since then additional drainage had been installed to ensure the ground water was able to flow away from these areas.

In his supplementary Mr Hussain noted that before Dignity took over their contract RMBC was responsible for the cemetery. Drainage was installed in 1999 so RMBC was aware of the flooding issue at that time. He felt he was not receiving a clear answer. The graves were flooded and that needed to be rectified. It was the responsibility of RMBC not Dignity, who had indicated it was prior to their engagement, to fix the issue and apologise to the muslim community for their failings. He asked if RMBC was going to fix the drainage system at the cemetery?

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In response Councillor Alam clarified that he also had many relatives buried at the cemetery including his late wife. He was aware that there was an issue with ground water but not with flooding. When he became aware of the issues last year immediate action was taken and the Council forced Dignity to take action. Dignity were operationally responsible for the drainage and the Council would continue to ask them to address this.

Question 2: Shazia Yousaf noted that Councillor Saghir Alam, at the last cabinet meeting, alleged that Mohammed Omar decided to pull out of the review due to being "hounded by the community", which "created a toxic environment". Is this hearsay, or is there evidence to back this up?

Councillor Alam explained that before he went on leave, which was the week before Mr Omar was due to attend, Mr Omar was fine with the schedule of meetings. He was due to be here for almost 3 days, holding 5-6 meetings a day. Councillor Alam was not certain what happened during his leave however Mr Omar had cancelled the days he was due to attend. When he raised this Councillor Alam was told that Mr Omar had been contacted by 6-7 members of the public pressuring him about the review. Mr Omar then decided to withdraw.

Councillor Alam sought clarification that no one from their organisation was contacting Mr Omar during the 5 days before his intended visit.

In her supplementary Shazia Yousaf said it was her understanding that Mr Omar had withdrawn because all the mosques had not been invited to meet with him as most were not invited by the Mosque Council of Rotherham. Could he confirm which mosques were members of the Mosque Council that he was the Chair of?

Councillor Alam explained there were eleven mosques who were part of Rotherham Mosque Council. The stakeholder group consists of over 50 organisations invited to come and meet Mr Omar. It was unfair to say they weren't invited as every single mosque on the list was invited to the meeting and your organisation was invited to have two hours discussion with him. The whole review was completely independent. Officers had facilitated the meetings but were not involved with operational issues.

Question 3: Nida Khan noted that Councillor Read mentioned at the last cabinet meeting that he was concerned for the safety of his officers and staff during meetings with the public. Can I ask what has led to such concerns? This was a serious allegation.

Councillor Read thanked her for her question and explained that there was no allegation. He what he had explained at Cabinet was that he had a responsibility for the safety of staff, and he did not want to be putting staff into difficult positions. He had been made aware of at least one instance of a member of staff being left in tears. He understood that people felt strongly about the issues and understood that people would emote strongly about those issues, which was understandable however

the Council could not put its staff in a position where they felt threatened or concerned for their safety. What he had tried to do at Cabinet, and hoped that it came across in the recording, was to offer a way, for the gentleman who attended Cabinet, that the Council could facilitate the kind of dialogue that was needed, whilst also ensuring that everybody, both sides, felt safe and secure having those conversations.

In her supplementary Nida Khan said she understood what was being said and she had been present for most of the conversations referred to, but again it was hearsay. The police were present, and no such things happened that he was alleging and there were no police records of such things. She felt that comments such as those were very derogatory. It was understood that people got very emotional when speaking about death. She indicated that they appreciated what was being offered and were waiting to know when conversations could begin.

In response Councillor Read clarified that he was not simply referring to one particular meeting but was referring to all issues which he had been informed had happened over a period of time in different locations. He appreciated the sentiment that she expressed around the need to things to move forward constructively and a meeting would be organised in a way that worked for everyone involved.

Question 4: Mr Adeel Hussain asked his question regarding Disastrous Cycling Route Development: Why does Rotherham Council bother with consultation plans if they're not interested in hearing the answers?

Council Beck thanked Mr Hussain for his question but indicated he did not recognise his description. The Council currently had two schemes underway in the town centre.

In relation to the Wellgate / Broom Road scheme, In October and November 105 people gave their views, with the majority expressing support rather than opposition.

In relation to the Sheffield Road / Westgate scheme, it was true that when the Council consulted on the first set of proposals it received a degree of opposition. The Council rethought and re-wrote the proposal: removing banned turns, keeping the junction at the top of Main Street as it was, and crucially, for businesses, creating more car parking spaces. The Council had listened, which was why revisions had been made to the scheme.

In his supplementary Mr Hussain mentioned that over 8 years people and businesses had responded to consultations with 95% indicating they did not want the cycle scheme however the Council was still proceeding. It was felt the scheme would have a negative impact on the people and businesses in the area.

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In his response Councillor Beck refuted some of the views expressed. The scheme was possible because the Government had made funding available to deliver active travel schemes to make it safer for people to cycle to work or to use the town centre and those who lived in the area. He acknowledged there was short term pain associated with delivery of the schemes, however local residents and business would benefit from the scheme.

The Council did listen which was why the scheme had been radically altered receiving a more positive response. Officer spoke to local businesses, held drop-in sessions and when it was completed people would be able to see the improvements.

Question 5: Mr Eric Shaw asked for an update on Traffic Calming and 20mph Zones in the Boston Castle Ward?

In response Councillor Beck said he had been advised that as part of the Council's Local Neighbourhood and Road Safety Scheme programme a scheme had been identified for the area bounded by Moorgate Road, Alma Road, Wellgate, Broom Road, Broom Avenue and Beaconsfield Road. The Council would be consulting on the proposal over the coming months, and he would be able to respond to that accordingly and consultation would be carried out before any plans were taken forward.

The Mayor advised that questions 5 and 6 would receive a written response.

### **7. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

There are no such items that required the exclusion of the press and public from this meeting.

### **8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT**

During his statement, the Leader congratulated Cllr Julia Hall for winning the Dinnington By-Election and welcomed her to her first Council meeting.

He explained that last week the Council received confirmation from the government that England's first Investment Zone would be in South Yorkshire. He noted that the Council was meeting in the so-called "spatial core" of the zone right now. It would stretch from here in the heart of town, out through the AMP and Sheffield Business Park and through to Sheffield City Centre.

He felt that the fact that the area was agreed was testimony to the hard work of staff from both councils, the MCA and the two universities. It recognised the national significance of the work being undertaken at the AMP.

The government's funding package of an additional £80m over five years was a welcome commitment, but more significantly was that they recognised the flaws in the previous government proposals, rowed back on the kind of deregulation free for all that would have been bad for the wider economy, and put more control about the kinds of incentives for businesses back into local hands.

It was expected to create 8000 new jobs and bring in 31bn worth of private investment.

This week he was delighted to be attending the annual summer celebration event organised by our Looked After Children's Council on Friday. This annual event celebrated the achievements of our Looked After Children and provided the opportunity for a lot of fun and laughter.

Other members also offered their congratulations to Councillor Hall.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester enquired if the investment zone excluded the deprived areas in the east of the borough and asked if he could elaborate on what benefits there might be in terms of employment opportunities with those areas?

Councillor Ball welcomed the investment in the region. He had previously asked a question regarding the SYMCA Strategic Plan, he had not received any response from April when it was raised, and the potholes mentioned were still on the A6321 and he would welcome an update.

Councillor A Carter welcomed the investment zones but highlighted the need to ensure those schemes represented and benefited the whole of the borough.

In response the Leader explained that the Government set out some rules about the size of the scheme regarding its size. He mentioned it because it could create some challenges for parts of the borough but also for others. The Council wanted to ensure it could get the benefits of that for the borough as much as possible. There would be challenges in relation to public transport. There was a proposal for a train station at Waverley that would help to connect places in south of the borough.

He felt the more that could be done to help create greater centres of employment and greater demand for both those high-skilled jobs along with other roles the more the benefits will be felt by the more deprived areas of the borough.

## **9. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 19 June 2023 be noted.

**10. ANNUAL REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION**

Councillor Read introduced the report explaining it was the annual review of the Council's Constitution ensuring it remained fit for purpose. There were limited amendments and updates proposed. Items to make it easier to follow the flow of debates, provision for administrative amendments along with information regarding the terms of reference for the Audit Committee.

There was also a proposal in terms of allowing substitutes. Substitutes had been allowed for planning meetings for some time, but this was to ensure that, as far as possible, meetings were quorate and able to function properly.

Councillor Ball seconded the report noting all the members of the Constitution Working Group had worked together to produce the amendments which would be kept under constant review.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester welcomed the amendments but expressed concerns regarding substitutions in particular for non-aligned members. He asked if non-aligned members could call on a member from another political group to act as a substitute at a meeting on their behalf.

Councillor A Carter expressed concerns regarding the Constitution overall, in particular the officer delegations regarding the revenue budget as this took responsibility from members. He also sought clarification regarding member questions to this meeting, whereby a member had submitted a question which they were not able to ask. He expressed a need to ensure that officers understood that where the question did not specifically mention an individual and was intended to highlight a wider issue, it should be considered. Members needed to ensure that policy and boroughwide issues were able to be heard.

Councillor Read responded indicating that as a principle bringing forward a situation that may expose an individual was not something the Council would want to do. Discretion for the interpretation of the Constitution sat with the Monitoring Officer as it did in all councils.

He noted that the Chair of a committee already had the discretion to invite members to attend and speak at meetings on specific items. As part of the ongoing review of the constitution consideration would be given to enabling the scheme of delegation to be adapted to allow non-aligned members to request a member from another party to act as their substitute.



Resolved: That Council approved:

1. The Substitution Scheme set out in Paragraph 2.7 be added to the Constitution.
2. The amendments to the Motions process and the Motion/Amendment Flow Chart set out in Appendix 1 be added to the Constitution.
3. The provisions of the Constitution relating to administrative amendments set out in Paragraphs 2.15 and 2.16 be made to the Council's Constitution.
4. The amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee set out in Appendix 2.

**11. MEMBERSHIP OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL, POLITICAL BALANCE AND ENTITLEMENT TO SEATS**

Councillor Read proposed the report asking all to check the nominations listed in Appendix B of the Mayor's Letter. He noted that a further report would be brought to the October meeting to reflect the changes required after the recent by-election.

The report was seconded by Councillor Allen.

Resolved: That Council:

1. Noted the political balance of the Council has changed due to changes in the number of Conservative, Non-aligned members and the creation of a new Conservative Independent Group which took place in May 2023.
2. That the entitlement of the membership of the political groups was agreed and such entitlements be reflected in Council's appointments of members to committees as detailed in the Mayor's Letter.
3. That the nomination for the Local Pension Board Rotational Member and Transport for the North Audit & Governance Committee was agreed as detailed in the Mayor's Letter.

**POLITICAL GROUPS**

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>Designated Leader &amp; Deputy Leader (Number of Members)</b>
Labour	Leader – Councillor Chris Read Deputy Leader – Councillor Sarah Allen (34 Members)
Conservative	Leader – Councillor Simon Ball Deputy Leader – Councillor Lewis Mills (14 Members) *
Liberal Democrats	Leader – Councillor Adam Carter (4 Members)
Independent Conservative	Leader – Cllr Barley (2 Members)

**\*Non-Aligned Members:** Cllr Bennett-Sylvester, Wilson, Elliott, Jones (1 x vacancy Dinnington Ward - Independent as of 24 May 2023\*)

\*The calculation that includes the outcome of the result of the Dinnington Ward Election will be brought to the next Council meeting.

**NOMINATIONS TO COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PANELS**

Cabinet

Leader – Councillor Read  
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working – Councillor Allen  
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor Cusworth  
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health – Councillor Roche  
Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy – Councillor Lelliott  
Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment – Councillor Beck  
Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion – Councillor Sheppard  
Cabinet Member for Housing – Councillor Brookes  
Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance – Councillor Alam

Audit Committee

Cllr Baker-Rogers  
Cllr Browne  
Cllr Wyatt  
Cllr Mills  
Cllr Elliott

Licensing Board

Cllr Ellis  
Cllr Hughes  
Cllr Wyatt  
Cllr Clark  
Cllr Pitchley  
Cllr Cooksey  
Cllr Hoddinott  
Cllr Monk  
Cllr McNeely  
Cllr Browne  
Cllr Aveyard  
Cllr Haleem  
Cllr Barker  
Cllr Castledine-Dack  
Cllr T Collingham  
Cllr Mills  
Cllr Reynolds  
1 x Liberal Democrat Vacancy  
1 x Independent Conservative Vacancy  
Cllr Jones  
Cllr Bennett-Sylvester

Licensing Committee

Cllr Ellis  
Cllr Hughes  
Cllr Wyatt  
Cllr Clark  
Cllr Pitchley  
Cllr Cooksey  
Cllr Hoddinott  
Cllr Monk  
Cllr McNeely  
Cllr Barker  
Cllr T Collingham  
Cllr Mills  
Cllr Reynolds  
Cllr Jones (gifted by Independent Conservative)  
Cllr Bennett-Sylvester

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### Planning Board

Cllr Atkin  
Cllr Bird  
Cllr Taylor  
Cllr Cowen  
Cllr Andrews  
Cllr Keenan  
Cllr Sheppard  
Cllr Khan  
Cllr Havard  
Cllr Ball  
Cllr Bacon  
Cllr Burnett  
Cllr Fisher  
Cllr Tarmey  
Cllr Elliott

### Staffing Committee

Cllr Read  
Cllr Allen  
1 x appropriate Cabinet Member as determined by the  
matter to be considered  
Cllr Ball  
Cllr T Collingham

### Standards and Ethics Committee

Cllr McNeely  
Cllr Griffin  
Cllr Hughes  
Cllr Sansome  
Cllr Yasseen  
Cllr Z Collingham  
Cllr Bacon  
Cllr Wilson

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Cllr Clark  
Cllr Bacon  
Cllr Baker-Rogers  
Cllr Pitchley  
Cllr Cooksey  
Cllr Yasseen  
Cllr Wyatt  
Cllr Browne  
Cllr Ball  
Cllr Tinsley  
Cllr Miro  
Cllr Elliott

Health Select Commission

Cllr Yasseen  
Cllr Miro  
Cllr Griffin  
Cllr Havard  
Cllr Bird  
Cllr Cooksey  
Cllr Sansome  
Cllr Hoddinott  
Cllr Andrews  
Cllr Keenan  
Cllr Foster  
Cllr Baum-Dixon  
Cllr Hunter  
Cllr A Carter  
1 x Conservative Vacancy  
1 x Conservative Vacancy  
Cllr Thompson  
Cllr Wilson

Improving Lives Select Commission

Cllr Pitchley  
Cllr Cooksey  
Cllr Baker-Rogers  
Cllr Griffin  
Cllr Hughes  
Cllr Monk  
Cllr McNeely  
Cllr Khan  
Cllr Haleem  
Cllr Atkin  
Cllr Bacon  
Cllr Z Collingham

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Cllr Mills  
1 x Conservative Vacancy  
Cllr Bennett-Sylvester (gifted by Liberal Democrats)  
1 x Liberal Democrat Vacancy  
Cllr Barley  
Cllr Wilson

### Improving Places Select Commission

Cllr Wyatt  
Cllr Tinsley  
Cllr Taylor  
Cllr Havard  
Cllr Cowen  
Cllr Ellis  
Cllr Atkin  
Cllr McNeely  
Cllr Aveyard  
Cllr Khan  
Cllr Andrews  
Cllr T Collingham  
Cllr Castledine-Dack  
Cllr Reynolds  
Cllr C Carter  
Cllr Bennett-Sylvester (gifted by Liberal Democrats)  
Cllr Barley  
Cllr Jones

### Corporate Parenting Group

Cllr Cusworth  
Cllr Pitchley  
Cllr Browne  
Cllr Z Collingham  
Cllr Elliott

### Introductory Tenancy Review Panel

Chair and Vice Chair to be drawn from members of the  
Improving Lives Scrutiny Commission or Improving Places  
Scrutiny Commission

Cllr McNeely  
Cllr Cooksey  
1 x Conservative Vacancy  
Cllr Bennett-Sylvester

Joint Consultative Committee

Cllr Alam  
Cllr Allen  
Cllr Clark  
1 x Conservative Vacancy  
Cllr Jones

Health and Wellbeing Board

Cllr Roche  
Cllr Cusworth

Local Pensions Board

Cllr Hoddinott

Transport for the North Audit & Governance Committee

Cllr Baker-Rogers

**12. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - REVISION TO DISTRICT HEATING CHARGES 2023/24**

Councillor Brookes proposed the report explaining that in March 2023, as part of the HRA report, the Council agreed to increase the district heating charges as a result of significant inflation and the need to purchase the energy to be used at that point.

The report proposed at the meeting was responding to national policy as well as the stabilisation of the energy market meaning the Council was able to reduce bills for district heating customers. The report also sought a delegation to officers to enable them to react quickly should there be the ability to further reduce residents' bills.

Councillor Allen indicated this demonstrated the Council's willingness to show support where possible.

Councillor A Carter welcomed the proposals and that they would be back dated and sought clarification that the delegation would only be for a reduction in costs not to raise prices.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester welcomed that the proposal would be backdated for residents. He asked for a review as to how information was provided to residents be carried out to ensure information was as clear as possible going forward.

Councillor Cusworth supported the report and the benefits it would bring to the residents of the borough.

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In response Councillor Brookes confirmed that the delegation was for one year only and was to give the ability to make in year reductions only.

Resolved: That Council:

1. Noted the decision Council took in March 2023 to increase the District Heating unit charge to 20.68 per Kwh for 2023-24 so that an average bill was equivalent to the heating element of the then Government's Energy Price Guarantee, leading to a proposed District heating budget deficit of £2.592m.
2. Noted that the actual cost to the Council of purchasing energy to supply District Heating schemes is lower than the cost assumed in March 2023; and that the agreed unit charge now exceeds the Energy Price Guarantee and the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) price cap for July 2023 onwards.
3. Agreed that in light of these changes, the District Heating unit charge per Kwh for 2023-24 is reduced to 15.94 pence per kwh and weekly prepayment charges are reduced by 59% to 67% depending on property size (Option 4 in this report), bringing prices into line with the Ofgem price cap for July 2023 onwards and well within the Energy Price Guarantee.
4. Agreed that this charge should be backdated to 3rd April 2023.
5. Agreed that the decision to reduce the price further during 2023-24 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, and the approved budget deficit of £2.592m cannot be exceeded through a delegated decision.

### **13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Councillor Clark proposed the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report. She explained that as with last year's report, the report had been aligned to the Council Plan priorities to demonstrate how the scrutiny had shaped service delivery and positive outcomes for the Rotherham residents.

A substantial portion of the scrutiny work programme focussed on monitoring specific performance objectives, key initiatives and partnership work. The work programme also retained an element of flexibility, to consider and respond to other important issues as they arose such as referrals from Council or suggestions from Members or the public.



2022/23 was an important year for Rotherham's continued recovery from the pandemic and response to the cost-of-living crisis. Across the commissions, scrutiny had looked at wide-ranging issues. Examples of this included Improving Places work on selective licensing; Health's work on access to dental care along with the Improving Lives review of the draft Child Exploitation Strategy.

One of the highlights of every year was the opportunity to work with Rotherham Youth Cabinet in the Children's Commissioner Takeover Challenge. This was due to take place in July but was postponed due to exam pressures. A further highlight was participating in the LGA pilot on Scrutiny of Children's Services and the follow-up work on work planning.

A personal highlight for me was the review into modern slavery which highlighted the work across our partners and agencies. The response to the recommendations was currently being formulated and we look forward to making a timely contribution to this important agenda.

She thanked all scrutiny members for their questions, enthusiasm and dedication and each of the chairs and vice-chairs for their work during 2022-23. She also added thanks to Caroline Webb, Senior Governance Advisor and Katherine Harclerode, Governance Advisor for their work on the report.

The Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Councillor Bacon seconded the report.

Councillor Pitchley thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the work undertaken by the Chair and Vice-Chair. She also thanked members of the Improving Lives Select Commission, noting everyone was very committed and able to add value where needed.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester took the opportunity to thank Councillor Clark saying she had been the best of them, and her leadership of the Board had given him every confidence that scrutiny did work, and he thanked her for this.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

**14. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM ROTHER VALE WARD COUNCILLORS**

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward updates for Rother Vale as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Brookes noted that the overarching aim of the thriving neighbourhood's strategy was for "Every neighbourhood in Rotherham to be a thriving neighbourhood, where people are able to work together to achieve a good quality of life." It was understood as councillors, that their constituents wanted more than a ring-fenced place to live. They wanted a quality of life and a livelihood. A useful shorthand for this was perhaps to talk, as we do, of a thriving neighbourhood.

However, outside of the framework that had been constructed, people were more likely to hear reference about properties and areas, estates, villages and towns. Particularly in the private sector world of development and construction, reference to neighbourhoods was more of a footnote. And when it came to new neighbourhoods, they were viewed primarily as a means of supplementing the UK's housing stock.

Private sector delivery of this demand was alas programmed to sell, and so to value, individual properties as opposed to neighbourhoods. They traded in one-off transactions with individual clients. They were not equipped – or inclined – to ascribe a value to communal facilities or public space, let alone to collective aspirations or societal change. This was a palpable failure of the market and a disconnect from what the Council was trying to achieve as community leaders in local government.

Given this environment, the modest projects and initiatives that councillors were able to effect within the parameters of neighbourhood working were ever more important. The many qualities that combined to create a thriving neighbourhood were interwoven and mutually dependent, and it had been seen that small, inexpensive, local initiatives could have an outsize effect. Particularly in places where community had yet to be defined.

One of the challenges for Rother Vale ward as a neighbourhood unit was with geographical spread and varied composition of different villages and communities. were they one or several neighbourhoods? Did they work together, or (as was often the case) did they compete?

It was known that neighbourhoods had to be socially as well as physically constructed. Most people felt they intuitively understood those constructed boundaries and measures, in the shape of either a 'good neighbourhood' with friendly, neighbourly interactions, security, gathering places and a clean, attractive environment – or in a "bad neighbourhood", with dereliction, low trust, anti-social interaction, and isolation.

People spent the majority of their lives in their neighbourhood. This was readily recognised for the older generations whom on the whole travel for work less and were often physically less mobile. However, there was an increased impact for people of working age, for whom technology had now liberated from commuting to the workplace. A new class of people hidden away from view and left deprived of company in a way they never were before. This was a permanent societal change in the time spent in

our individual neighbourhoods that any thriving model needed to recognise. We needed to be building and supporting neighbourhoods that reasserted the social dimension of professional life now more than ever.

Finally, one of the most important of people's needs, was the need to be bound to their neighbours in a relation of trust. Most people didn't only think about GDP, they cared deeply about things like identity, community, belonging and tradition. And they were driven by things like recognition, voice and dignity. For her this was the threshold of knowing what was aimed for with thriving communities.

Councillor Miro explained that the time of his election was a time of significant change in his life and was associated with some considerable joy and excitement as he became able to exact his values and principles to the service of his local area. He was driven by a love for the environment and renewable energy and the fear from climate change. He was able to support and develop community safety supporting health, tackle social and economic issues and improve community cohesion.

These objectives would be achieved by supporting 30 projects around the Rother Vale area, working with 15 different community groups and other agencies, including schools, parish and community councils.

In November they would be supporting the planting of 100 trees and would be launching an adopt a tree scheme.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

**15. NOTICE OF MOTION - SEWAGE DISCHARGE INTO RIVERS**

Notice of Motion – Sewage discharge into rivers

It was moved by Councillor Sheppard and seconded by Councillor Monk that:

**This council notes:**

That there is great public concern over the recently released statistics detailing sewage discharges into our local rivers by Yorkshire Water and Severn Trent Water.

The number of occasions when this happens and the total numbers of hours involved show that these discharges have now become routine practice, rather than an emergency response to extreme weather events.

Since privatisation, water companies in England have paid out an average of £2bn per year in dividends to shareholders, paid out huge salaries and massive bonuses to executives whilst ignoring the need to invest in their creaking infrastructure.

The effect of the horrific levels of sewage discharge into our rivers is seen in a negative impact to local wildlife coupled with the detrimental effect on the quality of life for residents who live near rivers. It also restricts the enjoyment of water-based activities for everyone.

**This council believes:**

That government inaction has allowed Yorkshire Water and Severn Trent Water, along with the other water companies in England, to prioritise their profitability as a business over their responsibilities to their customers and the environment.

Whilst this affects local areas to different degrees, as rivers flow across local authority and geographical boundaries, the government has to lead on this issue and provide a strong national response.

The rules on sewage discharges must be tightened and the Environment Agency needs to be given the resources to monitor and enforce on any breaches of the rules.

**This council resolves to:**

Write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, requesting that the government set out an ambitious strategy to reduce and ultimately eliminate sewage discharges into rivers and the sea. The financial cost of this programme must not rest on the shoulders of bill payers whilst at the same time these water companies continue to pay out dividends on their profits.

Ask our Improving Places Select Committee to invite Yorkshire Water, Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency to attend a meeting to explain what measures they are taking to reduce sewage discharges into our rivers now, plus outlining their future plans to address this issue in the medium to long-term, with annual updates on their progress to follow.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared as carried by the majority.

**16. AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee be adopted.

**17. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Standards and Ethics Committee be adopted.

**18. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS**

There were no questions for designated spokespersons.

**19. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS**

Question 1: Councillor Baker-Rogers asked to encourage participation in parkrun, please, could car parking charges be waived at the Clifton Museum car park until 1030am on Saturday mornings?

Councillor Sheppard explained that fees and charges were set annually through the budget setting report to Council in March and could not be altered at this time. Many of the events organised at the parks and green spaces by others shared objectives with the Council's own, in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging people to take part in physical activity. The income collected from parking formed part of the budget available to the Green Spaces service which ensured safe and enjoyable spaces. Reducing that income would impact on the Council's ability to provide or maintain such spaces so that activities could take place.

In her supplementary Councillor Baker-Rogers indicated that park runs were a fantastic initiative but asked how the Council would encourage participation in the Clifton Park Run?

In response Councillor Sheppard said the Council was happy to work alongside partners who had the commitment to promoting physical activity and exercise and understood they were popular events.

Question 2: Councillor Bacon asked would the Cabinet Member help me in allowing our churches in the borough to use the council's bulky waste service?

Councillor Beck indicated that as a rule the bulky waste service was only available to residential properties due to the capacity and demand for the service however if there was a particular circumstance Councillor Bacon had in mind, he was happy to discuss this.

In his supplementary Councillor Bacon indicated it would be beneficial to speak with Councillor Beck outside the meeting but was a little confused as the churches were able to subscribe to the Council's Brown Bin service but not use the bulky waste service.

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Councillor Beck agreed to speak with Councillor Bacon after the meeting about this particular issue.

Question 3: Councillor A. Carter asked what briefings had the council leader had regarding areas of Brinsworth and elsewhere in Rotherham becoming part of a new enterprise zone?

Councillor Read explained a report on the Investment Zone was presented to the MCA on 5 June 2023 to approve submission of an application to Government. The papers and minutes were available online or could be provided directly if needed.

In his supplementary Councillor A Carter indicated his understanding of the paper was that it included significant parts of Brinsworth including areas of Phoenix Sports Club. He queried when that location and other locations that affected the Borough announced and when was the Leader planning to discuss that and seek the views of local councillors regarding use of that land moving forward?

Councillor Read as indicated at the beginning of the meeting, the overall geography of that spatial core was subject to discussions with civil servants in London, so there had not been local consultation on each part of that. He felt the more relevant question was regarding when proposals would come forward in each place and how would resources be used. For a lot of the area £80million would not address it and he did not expect to see physical regeneration across the whole of that area. As and when proposals were available for individual places, he that would then be the appropriate time to consult with ward members and look at the communities. In relation to the specific site mentioned, he was not aware of any specific proposal for development on that site at the time of the meeting.

Question 4: Councillor A. Carter asked would the council commit to undertaking an immediate review of Wood Lane in Brinsworth, and commit to bring forward plans to open the road to local traffic?

Councillor Beck explained that when the remodelling was undertaken for the Parkway scheme, one element of that was to review the impact of re-opening Wood Lane to traffic. Following the remodelling work conducted the conclusion remained the same that there were concerns around the impact that would have on Brinsworth itself, on roads such as Brinsworth Road, Bonnet Lane and Whitehill Lane. There was a very real danger that if the Council was to pursue it that the unintended consequences may not be appreciated.

In his supplementary Councillor A Carter noted this was discussed at the recent Parish Council meeting and members from both parties were in agreement overall that it should be re-opened. It was one of the most common issues that he received from residents, and he appreciated the concerns on the Parkway and his view was that since Parkway had

happened it had changed things in terms of the likelihood that Brinsworth would become a rat run for traffic. He asked if a further review would be undertaken and share any briefings that had taken place since the Parkway had happened. He also asked if it wasn't able to be opened in both directions, could the Council commit to opening it in one direction, out of Brinsworth for example?

Councillor Beck explained that at the moment it was a designated primary public transport link and emergency vehicles could use when necessary. He committed to considering the impacts that the new Parkway scheme was having on traffic in Brinsworth.

Question 5 Councillor Jones noted that Rotherham was now in transition from a market town to an entertainment venue, to ease this transition he presumed we should be putting on events within the town centre, can you give me the exact budget the team has to deliver this?

In response Councillor Lelliott indicated she wanted Rotherham town centre to be both a thriving market town and an entertainment venue. Over the last four years the events programme in the town centre had doubled including the annual UPLIFT Skate and Arts Festival which attracted an estimated audience of 5,000 visitors and residents. The recent Rotherham Festival saw footfall in the town centre rise by 25%.

The total Council budget for events was £238,223 of which £20,000 was the net budget for town centre events. This was used to attract external funding from Flux, the Arts Council and meant that the gross budget for town centre events for this year was £287,000.

In his supplementary Councillor Jones noted at a recent meeting he'd been informed that a new two-hour format was the preferred option. He had also been informed there was no funding for town centre events. He questioned if the Council was developing the town centre as an events experience, then it should be properly funded.

Councillor Lelliott referred back to her previous answer that a total of £238,223 was available. She was delighted that the Council organised the successful Armed Forces Day celebration which was a valued part of Rotherham's activities each year.

Question 6: Councillor Jones noted that Rotherham west councillors had taken the decision to purchase an extra CCTV camera to tackle ASB, but we have now been informed that no cameras can be purchased or relocated until further notice, can you tell me why?

Councillor Alam explained the Council had invested over £800,000 in new CCTV equipment over the last two to three years, meaning a lot of new equipment had been provided. Officers were currently reviewing current provisions and future needs before undertaking further purchasing.

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He explained that the possible re-location of cameras was an option and requests to move ward cameras were prioritised based on risk and could be made via CAP's meetings. A task group would consider the appropriate risk and impact assessments prior to any changes.

In his supplementary Councillor Jones noted that one of the main reasons for requesting CCTV was to tackle anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and violence. He asked if ward members and residents could be given some idea of how long the review would take and how long they would have to wait for a camera?

Councillor Alam explained the review was being undertaken now and he could not indicate when it would end but he would raise Councillor Jones' concerns and get back to him.

Question 7: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked did we have any indication of the amount of cheques cashed by pawnbroking services following last year's £150 council tax rebate which saw so many shocking queues outside of town centre pawnbrokers?

Councillor Read explained that unfortunately there was no way of checking where the cheques had been cashed.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester felt that a substantial number of cheques had been cashed elsewhere. This was considered as part of the scrutiny process, and no one envisaged seeing queues of people trying to cash them in. He asked what lessons had been learned that, should this be needed in the future, would enable to people to access the money quickly?

Councillor Read explained that the number one lesson was that the information provided needed to be very clear that residents could exchange those cheques at Council offices for the full value and to ensure that staff were available to assist with this. He noted that the Council actually supplied the cheques to residents quicker than any other local authority.

Question 8: Councillor Monk noted that research showed that children who access early years provision for longer have improved educational outcomes. It also shows that high quality early years education benefits children from lower income backgrounds in particular. Can the Cabinet Member for Children tell me what the take up rate in Rotherham is for our 2-year-olds?

Councillor Cusworth offered thanks for drawing attention to the importance of early years education for our children. Research had found evidence that attending early year provision could improve a range of outcomes for children including laying the foundations for future long-term developmental milestones.



She explained that the take up rate in Rotherham for children receiving Early Education Funding was 90% in the Spring term 2023, 96% in the Autumn term 2022, and 88% in the Summer term 2022. These were the highest take-up rates achieved in Rotherham.

In her supplementary Councillor Monk asked how the Council could be certain it was engaging effectively with those most impacted by deprivation?

Councillor Cusworth explained that significant work was undertaken with partners and early help to support take-up in deprived areas using links across multi-agency partners, children's centres, health colleagues and wider services in order to promote the benefits. The Council had diversified its materials ensuring they were accessible to all areas of the community and targets specific areas.

Question 9: Councillor Elliot commented regarding Grange Park Golf Course, you will no doubt have seen the article in the Advertiser describing the poor condition of the course, I have had several golfers contact me saying the same. Are you able to say what discussions have taken place with the Lessees of the course in order to remedy the situation?

Councillor Lelliott explained the Grange Park Golf Course was managed by a private organisation and therefore the Council did not have any responsibility for the ground's maintenance of the course. However, discussions had taken place with the owner regarding the ground's maintenance. He explained there had been a series of dry weather, then wet weather and he was aware that under the terms of the lease he had to maintain it.

In his supplementary Councillor Jones agreed that the weather had been awful however the course was unplayable and no other courses had experienced the same issues. He asked for clarity as to whether the Council could force the owner to address these issues.

Councillor Lelliott explained the Council was working with the owner and were looking at the conditions within the lease to address this.

Question 10: Councillor Jones noted Rotherham Council were now looking into purchasing electric vehicles in larger quantities, can you please inform me what support measures and infrastructure are being put in place and what research has been done to support this decision?

Councillor Beck noted it was an ambitious programme purchasing a large quantity of electric powered vehicles. 114 vehicles had been identified to be changed and 64 of those had been identified as viable options to be replaced with electric powered vehicles.

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Many authorities were considering the same issues, one of which was that a number of vehicles would be taken home by staff therefore a home charging policy would need to be developed to understand what would mean for the individuals.

The Council 30 charging bays located across the borough. It was a challenge but one the Council would make work.

In his supplementary Councillor Jones noted there were a number of inbuilt dangers around repairing both the mechanical and body damaged electric vehicles. He understood guidance had been issued to recovery mechanics not to move broken down electric vehicles without emergency services being present. He asked if the Council was satisfied that they were asking staff to use what could be unsafe equipment and was the Council following its own research or using someone else's.

Councillor Beck said the Council had learned a lot from others, but it was following its own agenda and research. A lot of research had been carried out already over the past two years prior to it being considered by Cabinet. He was confident that the Council was up for the challenge.

Question 11: Councillor Jones said last year this council voted to enforce a new policy against repeat offenders that acquire multiple non-payment of fixed penalty fines, which included removal of the offending vehicle. Can you inform me how many vehicles have been removed since the new policy was enacted?

Councillor Beck noted the policy had been in place since 2018 and to date the Council had impounded 231 vehicles for persistent non-payment of fixed penalty fines, which was a tremendous achievement. Since 1 April 2023, the Council had impounded 10 vehicles and out of those 10 vehicles, 8 had been reclaimed with full payments being made.

In his supplementary Councillor Jones asked if there were situations where the offender's car would not be removed if they were disabled for example? He also asked if the Council would consider publishing names of people who had more than five outstanding penalties in the Advertiser?

In his response Councillor Beck indicated concerns regarding any potential safeguarding issues of doing that. He would seek advice regarding this matter and respond in writing.

Question 12: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester would like to welcome the current taxi licensing review. He asked what was the estimate of how much per year a taxi licensed in Wolverhampton is undercutting the better-quality Rotherham licensed cabs?

Councillor Lelliott offered to email Councillor Bennett-Sylvester with the full answer to his question but went on to explain the cost of licensing a vehicle with Wolverhampton was approximately £135 and in Rotherham

the vehicle licence costs between £179 and £271 depending on the age of the vehicle.

She explained that licensing fees could only be set at a level that recovered the costs associated with the licensing regime. Some of those costs were fixed irrespective of the number of licence holders, therefore, a higher number of licence holders could result in decreased licence fees. In Rotherham, this element of the charge was split between the 900 vehicle licence holders. In contrast, the fees in Wolverhampton were split between the 23,000 licensed vehicles, reducing the fee charged.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said one concern was that people had registered a taxi elsewhere and was not necessarily accepting the need for change in Rotherham and he asked it would be reasonable that people were being given the choice and could lead to them feeling unsafe?

Councillor Lelliott explained that was the purpose of the review of the policy that was intended to reduce the prevalence of out-of-town taxis in Rotherham.

Question 13: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said given details of under occupancy in town centre council buildings such as Riverside, when can we expect to see a condensation of our estate by say the selling off of underused buildings like say the town hall?

In her response Councillor Lelliott noted the Council had made a number of savings by rationalising its property estate and disposing of surplus properties. The Council had a number of operational buildings of which the Town Hall was one and the Council had no plans to withdraw from it, not least because there would be significant costs associated with recreating the chamber.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester mentioned the low occupancy rates in some buildings and if the Council could not show full usage of the build, would it be better to dispose of it to realise the capital?

Councillor Lelliott explained the Council continued to review all of its operational property portfolio to ensure it used its buildings effectively and efficiently to deliver its services.

Question 14: Councillor Tarmey asked does the cabinet member agree with me that it took too long for the council to take enforcement action following the Kiveton Park fire?

Councillor Beck noted the fire was put out in January this year and the priority was for extinguishing the fire, which had been done. The Council committed to use any powers available to ensure it did not happen again and for the removal of the waste. An enforcement notice had been issued and had come into effect. He was not aware of any appeal by the

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landowner at this time. It required the landowners to stop using the site for any further depositing of waste materials within 7 days and to remove all stored waste materials from the site within 6 months.

Councillor Tarmey asked if the Cabinet Member agreed with him that the Environment Agency had been left so badly underfunded by central Government that it was not able to take adequate enforcement action itself?

Councillor Beck agreed with this.

Question 15: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said the HAF programmes are providing essential summer activities for children do we have figures on the percentage of places made available being booked and more importantly actually attended?

Councillor Cusworth noted that it was an essential part of the holidays and then programme had gone from strength to strength each year. The programme offered a wide range of activities and last summer 37 providers delivered 52 programmes across the borough with 14,486 children and young people receiving 14,486 meals whilst taking part.

The numbers for take up during the summer holidays were not yet available, however members were asked to promote this within their wards.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked what was being done to monitor the uptake of this programme and to ensure activities were being offered in the communities that were hardest to reach?

Councillor Cusworth said the Council was constantly striving to increase the uptake and did have an opportunity to offer unused places to those who were from other vulnerable backgrounds so that places were not wasted.

The figures for the summer could be provided when available.

Question 16: Councillor Cllr Bennett-Sylvester asked how did the amount planned to be spent on footpath replacement this year compare to the amount being spent on the Wellgate Cycle Lane?

Councillor Beck explained the resurfacing programme for this financial year was £800,000 and the Wellgate Cycling scheme would cost in the region of £3.5m however it was important to know that the £800,000 for footways was Council funded. The £3.5m for the cycling scheme at Wellgate and or all cycling schemes was funded from central Government through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester noted that 40% of footpaths under the RAG testing system were in the red section. He queried if there was any way of obtaining further funding?

Councillor Beck noted there had been an underfunding of resurfacing of footways for a long time nationally, in terms of grants for such things. The Council was also trying to prioritise areas, such as those around schools and main walkways. It also tried to ensure funding went towards resurfacing surrounding pathways when highways works were carried out, where possible.

**20. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items to consider.