

**COUNCIL MEETING
28th February, 2024**

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

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

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

94. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor formally opened the meeting and made reference to his level of activity since the last meeting; the detail of which was appended to the Mayor's Letter. He also confirmed he had been honoured to attend a variety of different engagements from Holocaust Memorial Day at which he was joined by local faith leaders, dignitaries, and partners to remember and commemorate those who had lost their lives during genocides across the world.

Fragility of Freedom was the 2024 theme with songs from Saint Bernard's Catholic High School and Eastwood Village Primary school children and musicians along with speeches from guests that were also in attendance.

This was the first time Holocaust Memorial Day was held in Clifton Park and it had been very well received.

The Mayor had also attended a number of tree planting events and the High Sheriff Awards.

The Mayor also took the opportunity to express his sincere thanks to those Members who, whether through end of term, personal choice or the will of the electorate, were attending their last Council meeting.

95. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Resolved:- That apologies for absence be received from Councillors Atkin, Hunter and Miro.

96. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council Meeting held on 17th January, 2024.

Councillor Ball confirmed no procedural rules had been broken as part of the withdrawal from the agenda of the Palestinian motion.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 17th January, 2024, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

97. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the submitted report which confirmed the receipt of one petition that had been received since the last Council meeting containing 4031 valid signatures calling on the Council to commit to a permanent ceasefire and promote peace in Palestine and in the region.

Representatives of the petitioners were given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition was then discussed by Councillors for a maximum of fifteen minutes.

In accordance with the Petitions Scheme and Council Procedure Rule 13(7) the Council shall decide how to respond to the petition and shall decide either:-

- (a) to take the action the petition requests;
- (b) not to take the action the petition requests for reasons stated in the debate;
- (c) to commission further investigation into the matter, which may include reference to a particular committee for its views, prior to consideration at a future meeting of the Council; or
- (d) to refer the petition to the Cabinet where it relates to an executive function, in which case the Council may make recommendations to the Cabinet, but Cabinet will not be bound by those recommendations in discharging its executive functions.

The Leader thanked the presenters of the petition for the dignified presentation of family history and the challenges being faced by the people of Palestine. The issues were indeed complex and in bringing them to the Council's attention it was proposed the principles one and two in the petition be adopted by way of publicly condemning the Israeli Government's human rights and demand the UK Government calls for permanent ceasefire.

On this basis it was proposed to refer the other issues to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for further discussions to take place and consider what else might be appropriate.

In seconding this proposal Councillor Alam expressed his full support to the recommendations of a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and was mindful that many people in the UK had close ties to the region and expressed his sympathy to all of them.

No reasonable person supported any form of terrorism on both sides of the conflict and upholding the law was very important. He too called on the UK Government to act urgently and to ask for immediate ceasefire and was disappointed that the UK Government had not brought key stakeholders together to bring immediate solution to protect the people of Palestine.

Councillor Yasseen joined her voice to the conversations she had had with people in Rotherham, the suffering endured by Palestinian people and the scenes which were heartbreaking.

She called for moral accountability as the plight of thousands of innocent Palestinians murdered could not be ignored. She asked for a stand to amplify voices and advocate for the innocent and demand an end of these unconscionable acts. She had a moral obligation to speak against injustice and advocate peace of Palestinian and Jewish residents.

Councillor Tarmey in proposing an amendment to the petition immediately withdrew when being advised by the Monitoring Officer of the need to adhere to the petition scheme and the options laid open to them and was, therefore, agreeable to his points being taken up by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. He went on to confirm his shock and horror at the scenes of innocent victims.

Councillor Cooksey also welcomed the debate today after the frankly shocking events in Government last week. This clearly showed the Council was listening to local people that signed the petition. She gave context to information published and how a ceasefire would have saved so many more human beings.

She lent her voice for peace and diplomacy and called for a cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of support.

Resolved:- (1) That the petition be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the principles set out in the petition publicly condemning the human rights violations being conducted and the calling on the U.K. Government for a permanent ceasefire be adopted.

(3) That the petition be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to look further at what actions could be considered within two months.

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McNeely declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 104 (HRA Business Plan and Rent Setting) on the grounds of being a Council tenant and was granted a dispensation to vote.

Councillor Tinsley declared an interest in Minute No. 106 (Maltby Neighbourhood Plan) on the grounds of being a Maltby Town Councillor.

99. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(1) Mr. S. Currie asked due to the amount of traffic and students using this dangerous crossing pinch point outside the school gate, why had Kimberworth Community Primary School not been considered for an automated pedestrian crossing?

The Leader responded that had been a request but it dated back some time. The Leader was happy to take that through the process.

In a supplementary question Mr. Currie asked if Kimberworth, St. Bede's, Blackburn, Meadow View or Redscope could not get an automated crossing when children crossed the road twice a day, what criteria had been required for the all singing and dancing crossing on Meadowbank Road at the bottom of Pembroke Street, which was effectively a road to nowhere.

The Leader confirmed he would need to consult with Highways. The crossing on Meadowbank Road was following a request from the community. He would ask that the technical details be provided with a response in writing.

(2) Mr. Thorp was unable to attend the meeting so he would receive a response in writing.

(3) Dr. M. Yusufi explained this Council had adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. However, this definition was heavily contested due to its conflation of Judaism with Zionism. 104 civil society organisations have warned that the IHRA definition infringed upon freedoms of speech and harmed the fight against antisemitism. Dr. Yusufi asked would this Council consider adopting a more universally accepted definition, like the UN's framework on anti-Semitism?

Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance, confirmed that when the Council adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism it also stated its abhorrence for all forms of racism. That position remained unchanged.

He understood that three quarters of councils used the IHRA definition and that this definition was recognised by the United Nations. So while some people have offered a critique, it remained the most widely used definition and, therefore, logical for this Council to continue to recognise it.

In a supplementary question Dr. Yusufi asked about the 104 organisations that have raised concerns against this and asked the Council to think about this.

Councillor Alam confirmed the issues raised would be considered.

(4) Ms. H.Yusufi indicated that 66% of the British public wanted a ceasefire. Yet M.P.'s have vilified all those actively calling for this as 'intolerant' 'Islamic extremists'. Disturbingly, in spite of this Council's Equality Duty and the diverse nature of Rotherham, some members of this Council have publicly supported this blatantly Islamophobic narrative. Ms. Yusufi asked would the Leader and the Cabinet challenge and condemn this divisive rhetoric?

Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance, thanked Ms. Yusufi for her question and confirmed he too wanted to see a ceasefire. He had written to the Foreign Secretary calling for this and confirmed the Leader had also recently written to the Prime Minister to seek an immediate ceasefire.

The Council was committed to delivering its duties as set out in its Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy. The Council did and would continue to challenge prejudicial language and behavior.

The Council had invested considerable time over many years to foster good community relations and would continue to do so. However, the influence of the Council was more limited on matters of national and foreign policy.

Some M.P.'s and others had made unacceptable statements without going beyond the law. Members of public could challenge the actions of Members of Parliament and also express their concerns over the stances taken in parliament and national policy.

As part of a supplementary question Ms. Yusufi pointed out it was inaccurate to blame this on the Tories as Labour were also complicit, so rather than throw mud and hold party allegiance she asked what were people doing for the people of Rotherham rather than the public petitioning or asking questions.

Councillor Alam explained he would always call out racism in officers and Councillors. Some of these statements were unacceptable.

(5) Mr M. Y. Ashraf referred to the Economic Activity of Public Bodies Bill, or 'anti-boycott bill', which was currently making its way through the House of Lords. The Bill, if passed, would infringe upon this Council's ability to exercise its spending powers in line with the values of Rotherham residents. He asked would the Cabinet of this Council take a public stance against this infringement of the local autonomy.

The Leader confirmed that as a general rule it would. Advice from the Local Government Association indicated the changes were minimal. The Council had not yet made representations on this and as it would appear the reason for the Government bringing in this legislation was to provoke a response.

In a supplementary question Mr. Ashraf asked with the boycotting of South Africa would this Council do the same for Israel given the moral obligations, genocide and ethical cleansing not being permitted when Israel was illegally occupying the West Bank preventing people living on their own land.

The Leader did not disagree with what the questioner had said, but pointed out the Council had to act within the law. The Council was, therefore, very limited in the steps it could take as you have described.

(6) Ms. U. Yusufi explained over 4,000 Rotherham citizens from a diverse background have signed this petition, calling for a ceasefire. The message was clear: wanting urgent action and accountability. As the Council neared Purdah and given the timecritical nature of the issue what meaningful action would the Leader and Cabinet Members commit to in response to the petition and over what timescale?

The Leader confirmed this had been answered as part of the petition debate where a commitment had been given to look at the issues further over the course of the next few months.

In a supplementary question Ms. Yusufi pointed out she had heard a two-month timescale, but highlighted the importance of other issues as words on their own were not enough and meaningful economic action needed to be taken to end this violence and bring justice. She reiterated how keen she and others were to be involved and wanted to know how the Council could involve residents in more meaningful action.

The Leader confirmed that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Councillor Clark, would facilitate this open debate and conversation and would ensure contact was made with lead petitioners over the next few weeks.

(7) Ms. A. Rahim explained that in 1983, Rotherham Borough Council became a member of the National Steering Committee for Local Authority Action Against Apartheid and worked with local councils across the country to co-ordinate anti-apartheid actions. Following its own precedent,

would Rotherham establish a joint committee with other local councils to combat Israeli apartheid, as it did against South African apartheid?

The Leader explained there had not been a plan until now to consider concerns within the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board about what may and may not be done with reduced resources, but discussions would be facilitated over the next few months. The action the Council took in the 1980's resulted in the legislation which curtailed what could be done.

In a supplementary question Ms. Rahim pointed out that there had been action in the past, but this was just basically the same that the Israelis were now doing. It was difficult to find any difference how this could issue be treated differently. She asked could the Leader give her a timescale when the public could expect some response on this issue.

The Leader confirmed a meeting would be facilitated within the course of the next few weeks and this would determine what could and could not be done. He understood the strength of feeling on this matter and it was worth exploring and this would be done fairly quickly to make sure those voices were heard within the timeframe described.

(8) Mr. M. Norton asked why had the Council sponsored and allowed a house in an established residential street such as Spinneyfield, with clear restrictive covenants, to be converted as a small care home business when the most cost-effective option and least disruptive for all Council tax payers would be to use bespoke new build properties?

Councillor Lelliott, Cabinet Member, Jobs and the Local Economy, responded and confirmed this was not a Council property. The building and services at 24 Spinneyfield was a private development and the Council had no power to 'not allow' a house to be used by a company for a single adult household. The use of a house for up to six adults living together as a single household and receiving care did not require planning permission.

The covenant was a civil matter in which the Council had no involvement and this had already been communicated to residents in the area.

The current planning matter related to ramps and was subject to a planning application.

In a supplementary question Mr. Norton asked if a management plan had been seen for this business and why had it not been published and available on the Planning portal.

Councillor Lelliott explained this property did not require planning permission. There were different categories relating to a Category 3 house and this was split into 3 sub-categories:-

C3(a) covered use by a single person or a family (a couple whether married or not, a person related to one another with members of the family of one of the couple to be treated as members of the family of the other), an employer and certain domestic employees (such as an au pair, nanny, nurse, gardener etc), a carer and the person receiving the care and a foster parent and foster child.

C3(b) up to six people living together as a single household and receiving care e.g. supported housing schemes such as those for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems.

C3(c) allowed for groups of people (up to six) living together as a single household. This allowed for those groupings that did not fall within the C4 HMO definition, but which fell within the previous C3 use class, to be provided for i.e. a small religious community may fall into this section as could a homeowner who is living with a lodger.

Therefore under Planning law there was no authority to stop this household functioning as a household. These were six people living together and getting the support they needed and the Council had no functions under law to prevent this as it was not breaking the law.

(9) Mr. K. Ollivant explained RMBC continued to ignore covenants against business use on Spinneyfield. Despite a Consultant's report, assurances given from September's meeting and against the Council's own Planning Enforcement Officer's findings the Council now supported Rhodos Properties avoiding any proper consultation for their care home development. They have stonewalled for months so asked was there now a conflict of interest apparent between Social Services wants and our rights?

Councillor Lelliott, Cabinet Member, Jobs and the Local Economy, responded and reconfirmed planning permission was not required for up to six adults to live together and receive care. There was no requirement to publicly consult as no planning permission was required.

This was a family home with people living together and getting the care they needed by a private company.

The issue of the covenant was a civil matter.

The current planning matter related to ramps and was subject to a planning application. Any property on Spinneyfield that required ramps would be subject to the same thing. Officers have been out and Planning Officers content that they were not breaking planning laws.

In a supplementary question Mr. Ollivant pointed out that in following the positive meeting the Cabinet Member and Nigel Hancock when assurance was given by our own independent expert provided why was it that the Council still was not considering it to be C2 use with the parking alone for

seven cars suggesting a C2 use when the streets of Spinneyfield were single family dwellings. Twenty-four hour care was a C2 use so why was the Council not considering C2 use as considerations to actual planning requirements.

Councillor Lelliott pointed out she had already explained about the use, but would ask that Planning Officers send this in detail in writing.

100. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

101. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader presented his statement and made to reference to:-

- Holocaust Memorial Day in Clifton Park on the 25th January, 2024.
- Tenth project for the Towns and Villages Fund in Thurcroft.
- Successful Employment Solutions Event held last Friday in Riverside House with more than 600 people were in attendance.
- Magna Science Adventure Centre would host Boeing's Newton Room installation.
- Awards presented on 8th February, 2024.
- Waleswood Camp Site receiving Highly Recommended in the Campsite Awards.

Councillor Ball commended the work of Councillors that had been undertaken which had been very hard. There was a need for different councillors so challenge was very important.

He thanked staff and others who had helped him and others over past few years.

Councillor Reynolds asked if the Leader could instruct the Cabinet to be far more citizen friendly rather than having rules and protocols if they did not like what they were being asked to do. He asked if the Leader would cascade this for a more diplomatic and consensual approach from the Cabinet.

Councillor McNeely referred to the Employment Solutions Event held in Riverside where over six hundred people attended. The timing was unfortunate in that students of schools and colleges could not attend so if possible could this also be facilitated in an evening so they could attend.

Resolved:- That the Leader's Statement be received and the contents noted.

102. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 22nd January and 12th February, 2024.

Councillor Ball noted the concerns about Maltby Cemetery and asked what work was taking place to find space to allow the people to bury their loved ones in the home town of Maltby.

The Leader confirmed this was an ongoing piece of work and would ask the Cabinet Member with responsibility to respond.

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 22nd January and 12th February, 2024, be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

103. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2024-25

Pursuant to Minute No.146 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 February 2024, consideration was given to the report that proposed the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2024/25.

In moving the budget report, the Leader thanked all Members who had worked so hard to put together the proposals for this year. He thanked Finance staff, Cabinet colleagues, the Chief Executive and especially Councillor Alam in ensuring serious budget proposals were brought forward for the coming year. As ever this year's budget marked the culmination of many months of hard work and long nights.

The Leader explained Rotherham was in a better position than many other Councils across the country with six Councils declaring they could not balance their budget, Somerset seeking the ability to increase council tax by 10%, Bradford asking for additional financial help from the Government to help fill a £120 million budget shortfall over the next five years and Sky News reporting last week that out of one hundred and twenty-nine councils, only eight proposed a lower council tax increase than the maximum allowed by the Government's cap; five of those were proposing more than 4.8%.

The Leader was pleased to propose an increase below the referendum cap for the fifth year in a row and believed this to be the second lowest increase of any Council with social care responsibilities anywhere in the country and the lowest in Yorkshire.

Having taken tough decisions a Band D Council tax payer in Rotherham had nearly £200 more in their pocket today than they would have done otherwise. The Council would continue the Council Tax Support Top-Up payments for a further year worth £121.96. It would again support 14,000 Rotherham households of working age through the cost-of-living crisis, lifting 10,000 of those out of borough-wide Council tax altogether.

The Leader further explained that after £200 million of cuts under this Government, communities in Rotherham were poorer not just in their private lives, but also in their public spaces.

To avoid the future remaining fragile the Council needed to be sustainable, reliably funded, based on multi-year settlements to better provide for the needs of families, who were more often the hardest hit.

The number of children in the borough needing free school meals had risen by 25% in the last three years. This equated to an extra two and half thousand extra children.

In proposing universal baby packs in this budget the Leader explained this would ensure every newborn child had the essentials and every parent had access to the help and support that they needed. Launching this later this year would make it as simple and easy as possible to get good quality basics and by registering at a local children's centre, the Council could ensure parents had the right support from day one.

By reinvesting £370,000 a year, this would increase the number of open access sessions in children's centres and bolster youth work provision for older children too. By creating hundreds of additional sessions each year that anyone could attend for free it would give additional time and energy to any family who needed to use it. In the words of Councillor Monk for families who needed somewhere to go ... for free.

The Leader pointed out that Members have supported improvements to children's playgrounds in their areas and in the UKSPF plan a few months ago a commitment was given to additional funding to match-fund two new Multi-Use Games Areas. This budget, with nearly a million pounds of additional resources, had commitments for major upgrades to eight further children's play areas across the borough, including those at Thrybergh and Rother Valley Country Parks and to fix and renovate the Water Splash in Clifton Park.

Alongside the Rotherham Parent Carer's Forum the Council would bring forward their long-held ambition for a new Hub for children and families with special educational needs in the town centre.

In addition, the Leader reiterated that Forge Island cinema was due to open later this summer and with the award-winning children's literacy charity Grimm & Co, the programme of library investment across the

borough, ten new playgrounds, more youth work, better access to children's centres, the SEND Hub, and baby packs; even in these difficult times the Council would carve out a space for children to grow and flourish, whatever their background. This was a budget for families.

The Leader explained this was also a budget that gave priority to those areas of spending that residents have told us were the most important to them. Since 2016, the number of potholes in the borough's roads had been halved and better than the national average. People still want to see more done so a further £16 million was to be invested over the next four years to resurface forty miles more carriageway and scores more pavements.

More funds would be provided towards keeping the streets clean, especially in principal towns like Maltby, Dinnington, Swinton, Wath and the town centre itself. A dedicated team of sweeper drivers would be introduced to help improve the appearance of streets everywhere. Traffic lights and street lights would be fixed and a further £400,000 had been put towards small-scale local road safety improvements at the request of communities.

The Leader reiterated residents were being supported by halving the cost of household bulky waste collections fines for littering and fly-tipping would be increased up to the maximum allowed.

Technology would be purchased to improve the response to residents, so they know when their reports were being actioned, streets cleaned, fly-tipping removed or streetlights fixed.

The Leader was pleased to report that a further £5.5 million of capital funding to deliver flood alleviation schemes at Whiston and Laughton Common was to be provided, with further cash available to support the development of a scheme at Catcliffe (if required) following the outcome of the Section 19 Audit Report. This was the chance for the members for Dinnington, Sitwell and Rother Vale to stand with your communities and show that you too want to see those flood defences built by backing Labour's proposals today. It would look pretty dimly on Councillors who failed to take that opportunity.

Moreover, building on the success of the Towns and Villages Fund, seeing improvements to local centres in twenty-three locations across the borough and by putting an extra £2 million into new Our Places Fund the Council would continue to make tangible improvements in the places where residents lived.

The Leader pointed out Britain was also facing a homelessness crisis. There were more people living in temporary accommodation in England last year than at any time in history. Official figures last February showed a 25% increase in the number of people rough sleeping. In Rotherham

there were 146 people living in hotels or other temporary accommodation in December which was up by 25% on the year before. The homelessness crisis was a stain on the moral character of the country.

Whilst there was political opposition to the building of new homes and to de-fund the building of new council homes, homelessness was a catastrophe in the lives of far too many of residents. So the Council would do more to help people avoid falling into homelessness and provide more temporary accommodation. The Empty Homes Officer would be permanently funded, who had helped to bring forty-three otherwise dis-used properties back into residential use and there would be a continuation to deliver on the biggest Council homes building programme for fifty years.

The Leader believed Britain had fallen a long, long way these last fourteen years in ensuring residents' needs were met and these budget proposals would continue to build the better borough that residents so deserved and would do so in the hope and the knowledge that change was on its way.

In seconding the budget report Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance, passed on his thanks to those who had worked tirelessly to get to this position.

Services impacted on the lives of residents and with this investment this Council was focused on putting families first. There were challenges as a result of funding cuts since 2010. This budget made further investment for the benefit of the residents of this town, into community services and would benefit from capital investment into Clifton Park and digital inclusion. Despite the suffering and the cuts to funding, this Council wanted a truly responsible budget to ensure residents were fully supported.

Two notices of budget amendments had been received.

The first proposed for the Liberal Democrats by Councillor A. Carter and seconded by Councillor Tarmey sought support for:-

That the Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 report be accepted as proposed, except for the following amendments to:-

REVENUE BUDGET

1. Reduce the proposed Council Tax increase from 3.5% to 3.4%, with the proposed increase being made up of a basic Council Tax increase of 1.4% and an Adult Social Care precept of 2%.
2. Remove the budget investment proposal for Community Wealth Building, saving £120,000 per annum.

These amendments are in balance.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME (Appendix 3C to 3F Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2027/28):-

1. Cease the Markets and Libraries Redevelopment for a total reduction in the 2023/24 to 2027/28 Capital Programme of £26,280,745 saving £15,300,000 of the Council's own capital resources after removal of associated grant funding:
2. Add or increase budgets for the following investments, for a total increase of £7,139,960 in 2024/25.
 - a. Capital Investment Catcliffe Feasibility Study. Increase 2024/25 Capital Programme by £400,000 to carry out a Catcliffe feasibility study in relation to flood prevention.
 - b. Capital Investment Ward Budgets. Increase 2024/25 budget from £7120 to £100,000 for each of the two member wards, at an additional total cost of £1,486,080.
 - c. Capital Investment Ward Budgets. Increase 2024/25 budget from £10,680 to £150,000 for each of the three member wards, at an additional total cost of £1,253,880.
 - d. Increase the Towns and Villages Fund by £4m to be used on the same basis as the current fund.

These amendments reduce the Council's Capital Programme by £19,140,785 and free up £8,160,040 of the Council's own capital resources.

Councillor A. Carter proposed on the basis that focus needed to change with investment into towns and villages where people were working. Working habits had changed and people were not commuting so residents deserved to have their local areas made better. Cuts had been made to libraries and markets, but residents needed to have safer streets, more pedestrian crossings and more for young people to do. Cash was needed in every community where there was a need for a crossing, new shelter, new park, new district centre or a dangerous road resurfaced. By devolving funding to local areas, preventing limitations of smaller ward schemes, bigger investments could not happen, but with this budget now proposed it could.

Whilst working hard to stop the flooding in Catcliffe, hundreds of families had been displaced from their homes. Cash needed to be in place to make this stop.

Council tax must be lowered and vanity projects scrapped. Only then would towns and villages be better, safer and put an end to any flooding.

Councillor Tarmey seconded the first budget amendment to lower the increase in council tax. It was not right to invest £26 million in the town centre especially when cinemas were struggling, the town did not need a 1970s market. What it did need was something different. These proposals would devolve capital budgets in wards to allow for play parks, improvements to infrastructure, parking and would thus increase the town and villages fund by £4 million. This would be sustainable by saving the town centre investments and allow for investment into towns and villages instead.

The motion debate ensued and Councillor Bennett-Sylvester found the proposals non-sensical around the town centre developments and the so called 1970's market.

The Leader found the amendment similar to the previous one submitted and the criticism on the town centre and markets funding. He would much rather see the funding spent on the town centre rather than funding being returned and made reference to good examples of town centres with thriving markets thus creating a hub in the town. He was unable to support false promises when this budget only gave the impression problems could be solved with additional funding to each ward.

Councillor Baum-Dixon found this amendment out of touch, but welcomed the opportunity for investment into local areas rather than investment and focus on the town centre.

Councillor Ball acknowledged this Council was ignoring towns and villages outside the town centre. In reality there should be equitable capital investment into wards to support businesses and allow neighbourhoods to thrive.

Councillor Hoddinott was unable to support the initiatives of the amendment and leaving the local economy at the whims of shareholders. There was a need for traditional businesses to look how they could support alternative options especially when there were hidden gems in this borough.

Councillor Cusworth noted the easy arguments for devolved budgets in wards and the putting forward of plans to abandon work and progress made in the town centre. The town centre would prosper with local jobs at Forge Island and finally a cinema and eating places. This was what those consulted wanted and Rotherham would become more child centred and family friendly.

Councillor Alam could not support the amendment and believed the markets complex would transport money into Rotherham.

Councillor Sheppard spoke against the withdrawal from the market and libraries project. This was the Council's opportunity to invest and make a difference into an area which would develop onto becoming a fantastic scheme.

Councillor Roche referred to the pain and cost cutting due to austerity. The proposed ward funding would not sustain some of the infrastructure required.

In his right to reply Councillor Carter addressed the wasting of money on the market project and hoped that Members would vote for a budget increasing the budget for towns and villages to ensure they received a fair deal.

The second amendment proposed for the Conservatives by Councillor Ball and seconded by Councillor Mills sought support for:-

That the Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 report be accepted as proposed, with the exception of the following amendments:-

REVENUE BUDGET

Revenue Budget Investments

1. Reduce the budget proposed for Baby Packs by £280,000 in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to a total of £80,000 in each financial year. While supporting the aim of encouraging registration at Family Hubs, eligibility for the baby pack is to be changed to supply baby packs to households that are in receipt of means tested benefits and for the first child only.
2. Increase the Principal Towns Cleansing budget by £60k in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to a total of £426,000 in each financial year to be spent on the proposed Cleaner Streets and Roads programme – providing another two roles, additional to the 13 roles laid out in the proposal. The additional £60k will be for two new street cleaning roles for communities and “problem areas” that do not fall within RMBC’s high footfall definition, including rural roads. This will ensure communities such as Rawmarsh, Wickersley, Swallownest, Kiveton Park, Thurcroft and Greasbrough, are provided with additional and regular scheduled street cleaning in problem areas identified by ward members and neighbourhood coordinators. The Rotherham Town Centre team that has been created will be required to work two days on rolling basis outside of town centre each week to provide extra support in the cleaning of the unparished areas of the borough, including Moorgate, Rawmarsh, Swinton and Wath, and rural roads through the borough – including problem spots such as Royds Moor Hill/Worrygoose Road and Hill Top Lane/Far Dalton Lane.

3. Remove the budget proposed for the Restorative Hate Crime Service, saving £30,000 in 2024/25 and 2025/26.
4. Remove the budget proposed for Community Wealth Building, saving £120,000 in 2024/25 and 2025/26.
5. Allocate a budget of £100,000 in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to support a Youth Club and Service Provision Programme. This fund is to be used to provide grants of up to £10,000 that each of the Parish Councils of Aston-cum-Aughton, Anston, Dinnington St John's and Maltby, can apply for. The grants should be used to employ youth workers or for capital towards equipment. This grant is not to be used for rental fees of Parish Council owned property. A £60,000 fund will be available in both financial years for youth service provision in the unparished areas of Rawmarsh, Wath and Swinton, that local organisations and charities can apply for.
6. Allocate a budget of £240,000 in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to support a Love Your High Street: Invest Rotherham Borough scheme. An initiative to support ideas from local businesses, town/parish councils, organisations/community groups with projects that will help revive our high streets and help them to flourish for the future. This can include tidying up a high street shopfront, diversifying a business, launching a business, bringing back an empty high street unit into practical use, a social enterprise or community group embarking on a high street venture, or an event to attract more visitors. The fund will also help support delivery of high street plans within adopted Neighbourhood Plans. The project will also be used to support the regeneration projects in Dinnington, Wath and Maltby, to help attract new business to the three towns and support existing business with the transition. A team of two staff would be recruited to create and oversee the project, with a launch by October 2024. Additional funding will be sought from SYMCA and other sources to expand the programme which aligns with the MCA's economic regeneration aims. The programme is a move away from the attempt of using capital projects to improve high streets but instead creating the pro-business environment and encouraging entrepreneurs to set up business in our villages and towns.
7. Allocate a budget of £30,000 in 2024/25 and 2025/26 to support Woodland Management Improvements. The funding for project to improve woodland management at Anston and Alcove Plantation.

These amendments are in balance.

PROPOSED CAPITAL INVESTMENT

1. Reduce the budget proposed for Our Places Fund by £750,000 in 2024/25 and £550,000 in 2025/26, to set a budget of £450,000 in 2024/25 and £250,000 in 2025/26. The scheme to focus on four high footfall areas that missed out on Towns and Villages public realm work and funding. Remaining funding will be used to support previous Towns and Villages schemes and Capital Regeneration Project areas.

£300,000 to be allocated to Swallownest high street in 24/25
£150,000 to be allocated to Lordens Hill shopping area, Dinnington 24/25
£150,000 to be allocated to Bramley high street in 25/26
£100,000 to be allocated to Thorpe Hesley 25/26
2. Remove the Towns and Villages Fund unallocated balance of £1,927,245 and instead allocate this funding on the following basis: -
 - a. £820,000 to be allocated to Maltby High Street to complete the high street public realm improvement works, additional to the funding already secured.
 - b. The remaining £1,107,245 would then be used to support high streets via Love Your High Street Programme and other programmes to support local communities.
3. Increase the Road Safety Small Schemes programme to £400,000 for 2024/25 and 2025/26, an increase of £200,000 per financial year, to acknowledge the demand from elected members and the public. Areas such as Dinnington, Aston and Thorpe Hesley will be prioritised.
4. Increase the Principal Towns Cleansing Capital Programme to £195,000 for 2024/25, an increase of £27,500, to allow for additional equipment purchase to support expansion of the programme.
5. Create a Children's Neighbourhoods Playgrounds Programme Fund providing £0.5m in 2025/26 for grants of up to £75,000 for improvements to play equipment, especially inclusive play equipment in neighbourhood playgrounds with priority given to areas that are not benefitting from RMBC's neighbourhood park improvements.

These amendments reduced the Council's Capital Programme by £522,500 in 2024/25 and increased the Council's Capital Programme by £150,000 in 2025/26.

Councillor Ball introduced new ideas which would see business increased, streets cleaned, projects funded, young clubs around the borough and allow this balanced budget which the Finance Team had

help to support. It would not see the targeted approach for the baby packs, but allow for towns cleaning budgets to be increased where there was higher footfall including on rural roads and unparished areas. It would see the removal of the budget for hate crime and community wealth and thus allow for an allocation of a budget for youth clubs and local organisations to apply for.

There would be £240k to support a new initiative to love the high street and help deliver a number of high street plans. It would help regenerate new local businesses not just in the town centre and help launch other economic aims.

This budget would provide for £30k in 2024, 2025 and 2026 for woodland management and support capital regeneration in Swallownest, Lordens Hill, Dinnington, Bramley and Thorpe Hesley. It would remove the towns and villages funding and allocate additional funding where it could support a difference and a programme of work for local communities.

In terms of road safety there would be £400k over three years to acknowledge the demand from Members and the public about priority in certain areas. In addition there would be capital funding for additional cleaning, additional equipment purchase and children's neighbourhood playgrounds where resources were lacking.

Councillor Mills seconded the Conservative budget amendment.

Councillor Pitchley was disappointed with the removal of the baby packs when children in this borough deserved the best start in life.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester made reference to the areas highlighted by the amended budget proposals namely the removal of the baby packs and the Hate Crime/Restorative Service which he could appreciate the limited take up in more affluent areas, but expressed concerns about gender inequalities when the main benefit source was women.

Councillor Baum-Dixon did not believe the baby boxes were warranted for all new parents and believed targeted support should be for where it was needed. To continue would be a waste of taxpayers' money and should be more of a common-sense approach.

It would be more appropriate for the funding of towns and villages and to ensure streets and lanes were kept clean and clubs were available for young people.

In terms of road safety whilst a wide-ranging scheme had been secured in Woodsetts other areas need similar schemes so this amendment recognised this for outlying communities, recognised high streets and delivered improvements.

More funding was required for playgrounds and to ensure they were fully inclusive for children with disabilities to use the equipment as they too had the right to play.

This amendment also delivered on the commitment to funding tree maintenance especially following concerns around plantations to ensure people were able to feel safe and would provide high quality services.

Councillor Baker-Rogers believed all babies deserved the best start in life and the packs should be available to all. Parents then had a choice of whether they wished to take up the offer and should not be means tested to accept. This was raised at the last Overview and Scrutiny Management Board when there was a suggestion that limitations be placed on those parents who could accept.

Councillor Reynolds made reference to rejuvenation and historical uses of Council offices compared to the current operation and occupancy of Riverside House.

Councillor Cusworth was unable to support the amendment and the messages being portrayed for business in the town centre and investment into youth services.

The Leader was conscious of being told to spend less but spend more and how worse off families would have been if the plans for last year were agreed. There would have been higher council tax increases and potential risk of bankruptcy. Choices this Council had not made. This Council were fully supporting the Towns and Villages Fund with £2 million to fund schemes like Wath and Dinnington

Councillor Bacon gave a point of explanation for his reasons of raising the availability of baby packs at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

In his view it was the same old excuses about funding and the Council wasting money on cycle and bus lanes within the town centres whilst other areas were overlooked. Opportunities had been wasted for decades. These proposals were a well-managed budget plan to manage council tax and manage standards.

Councillor Hughes expressed her support for the baby packs and questioned the rationale for the proposed changes around tree management and hate crime.

Councillor Hoddinott believed this budget amendment penalised families and their babies with assumptions about the cost-of-living crisis and the pressures that people were facing. It was imperative that support channels were in place for families with links to children's centres and schemes introduced to plug gaps.

Councillor Barley also failed to see what the amendment brought and was not in support.

Councillor Ball in his right to reply challenged the comments and the funding gaps that would need to be explored and the lack of vision by this administration for towns and villages. Priorities needed to be rethought and the support to thriving neighbourhoods was not close enough to sort the problems. There appeared to be a lack of vision and business acumen for towns and under this budget there would be real business programmes. In reality thriving neighbourhoods needed a rethink and how this could be achieved and run alongside the bespoke high street proposal. This budget was a starting point not an end and success would enable tapping into resources once it was set up.

This budget amendment invested in youth services, better parks and playgrounds and provided extra street cleaning for rural roads not just town centres. Woodlands needed better maintenance and should be funded the vote for this amendment was urged.

The first amendment was then put to a vote and was lost.

The second amendment was then put to a vote and was lost.

The meeting now discussed the original substantive motion that had been moved by the Leader and seconded by Councillor Alam.

Councillor Allen reaffirmed her support to the Places Fund and continuation of the Community Leadership Fund aimed outside the town centre. The Council was committed to housing investments putting money into homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation supported by the permanent Empty Homes Officer, £30 million for existing housing stock alongside £126 million additional investment in new Council housing.

There would always be budget challenges, but the work of the Cabinet should never be underestimated and Members were urged to support the budget as proposed.

Councillor Roche welcomed the support to adults and public health, thus providing high quality care despite the significant pressures on the ability to deliver services. Funding within the budget would lead to better support for those that most needed it and on this basis Members were urged to support the proposals.

Councillor Sheppard commended the Council on this positive budget when others were facing financial struggles with potential Section 114 notices or even worse bankruptcy. His professed his continued support to the lowest council tax increases whilst benefitting from a range of investments making the borough cleaner and greener, positive moves to the biodiversity changes net gain scheme, support to the Archives

Service, further investment in the tree service and in the flood alleviation schemes.

Children deserved the best start in life. This budget would invest in playgrounds and deliver wonderful places for children to play.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester welcomed the investment and agreed his own Ward had benefitted from the support provided. He was particularly keen to see the delivery of play area funding and the new Bulky Waste Service.

He referred to the brown bin tax, the programme to replace concrete lampposts, and the investment for extra cleaning and in doing so was still concerned about the handling of large capital projects.

He was pleased to see the increase in funding for Rothercare even though some fees were going up more than the rate of inflation. He did not wish to see barriers, but welcomed the family friendly budget.

Councillor Tarmey was unable to support the budget and would have preferred further investment across all wards. Businesses needed to be supported and whilst not against the concept of the market regeneration, the level of investment was not required.

Children needed the best support in life and the new baby packs were a sensible approach in reducing inequalities. Whilst he was not in support of the budget, he did support this initiative.

Councillor Cusworth spoke in support of this family friendly budget. After fourteen years of austerity too many children were going without the basics, living in destitution since the pandemic and this budget supported parents in giving their children the best start in life.

Councillor Ball could not support the budget and questioned the regeneration promises for outlying towns and believed a change was needed. He could not support the market project, but the family friendly approach sounded good, but these were only soundbites.

This budget headlined support to make towns and villages cleaner, but the vast majority of support was within the town centre, meaning some of the more deprived areas were not eligible nor would receive the regeneration they required. The budget whilst reducing some fees promoted the baby pack initiative, but there appeared to be little to measure outcomes for Rotherham's taxpayers.

In his right to reply the Leader addressed the comments made by those who were not in support of the budget and whilst there were some increases in fees and charges against the rate of inflation, the Council was very conscious of pressures on household budgets and the need to provide services.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, and the Council's Constitution, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:-

For: The Mayor (Councillor Taylor), Councillors Alam, Allen, Andrews, Aveyard, Baker-Rogers, Beck, Bird, Bennett-Sylvester, Brookes, Browne, Clark, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, Elliott, Ellis, Foster, Griffin, Haleem, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Roche, Sheppard, Wilson, Wyatt and Yasseen.

Against: Councillors Barley, A. Carter, C. Carter, Tarmey and Thompson.

Abstentions: Councillors Bacon, Ball, Barker, Baum-Dixon, Burnett, Castledine-Dack, T. Collingham, Z .Collingham, Fisher, Hall, Mills, Reynolds, Tinsley and Whomersley.

Resolved: (1) That the Budget and Financial Strategy for 2024/25, as set out in the report and appendices, including a basic Council Tax increase of 1.5% and an Adult Social Care precept of 2%, be approved.

(2) That the extension to the Local Council Tax Support Top Up scheme, that will provide up to £121.96 of additional support to low-income households most vulnerable to rising household costs, through reduced Council Tax bills as described in Section 2.5.11-14 of the report submitted, be approved.

(3) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26, as described within Section 2.6 of the report submitted, be approved.

(4) That the Reserves Strategy as set out in Section 2.8 of the report submitted, noting that the final determination of Reserves will be approved as part of reporting the financial outturn for 2023/24, be approved.

(5) That the comments and advice of the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer), provided in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as to the robustness of the estimates included in the Budget and the adequacy of reserves for which the Budget provides (Section 2.14) be noted.

(6) That the feedback from the public and partners following the public consultation on the Council's budget for 2024/25 which took place from 8th December 2023 to 14th January 2024, attached as Appendix 4, be noted.

(7) That the proposed increases in Adult Social Care provider contracts and for Personal Assistants as set out in Section 2.4 of the report submitted, be approved.

(8) That the revenue investment proposals set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 2 be approved.

(9) That the Council Fees and Charges for 2024/25 attached as Appendix 7 be approved.

(10) That the application of the Business Rates Reliefs as set out in Section 2.10 of the report submitted, in line with Government guidance, be approved.

(11) That the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme as presented in Section 2.12 and Appendices 3A to 3F be approved.

(12) That the Treasury Management matters for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 9 of the report including the Prudential Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy, be approved.

(13) That the Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 5) be approved.

(14) That the continuation of the principles and measures adopted since April 2020 to make faster payments to suppliers on receipt of goods, works and services following a fully reconciled invoice as described in Section 2.11 of the report submitted be approved.

(15) That the Budget allocations for the Community Leadership Fund as set out in Section 2.9 of the report submitted be approved.

(16) That the Capital Programme Budget continues to be managed in line with the following key principles:-

- i. Any underspends on the existing approved Capital Programme in respect of 2023/24 be rolled forward into future years, subject to an individual review of each carry forward to be set out within the Financial Outturn 2023/24 report to Cabinet.
- ii. In line with Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules 7.7 to 7.11 and 8.12, any successful grant applications in respect of capital projects will be added to the Council's approved Capital Programme on an ongoing basis.
- iii. Capitalisation opportunities and capital receipts flexibilities will be maximised, with capital receipts earmarked to minimise revenue costs.

104. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - HRA BUSINESS PLAN, RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGES 2024-25

Further to Minute No. 126 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22nd January, 2024, consideration was given to the report which was seeking approval for the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2024/25 and proposed increases in housing rents, non-dwelling rents, District Heating charges and other service charges. It was recommended that Council dwelling rents be increased by 7.7%.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recorded all expenditure and income relating to the provision of Council housing and related services, and the Council was required to produce an HRA Business Plan setting out the investment priorities over a 30-year period. Following the introduction of HRA self-financing in 2012, the Council was awarded control over its HRA in return for taking on a proportion of national housing debt.

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 will support future investment decisions.

The HRA Business Plan was updated annually to ensure it reflected the current operating environment and in moving the report Councillor Allen outlined how the current year's Business Plan prioritised investment in the following areas:-

- Continued delivery of housing growth.
- Safety and quality of the housing stock, including damp and mould.
- Preparation for proactive consumer regulation from April 2024
- Meeting statutory minimum energy performance standards in the housing stock by 2030.
- Refreshing the Council's stock condition data by 2026.

The overall position remained challenging. Substantial inflationary pressures were evident in some costs increasing by more than 15% over the last two 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 increase over the coming years, putting further strain

on the Business Plan. At the same time, the Council wanted 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 face.

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 wholly or partially covered 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.

As at 31st March, 2023, the Council owned 19,963 homes, 614 leasehold homes, 108 shared ownership homes and 3,406 garages with a turnover from rents and other sources approaching £96.7m per annum (excluding the sale of new properties).

The report also considered the potential increase in HRA non dwelling rent fees and charges for 2024/25 and proposed a 6% increase. A full list of Fees and Service charges for the HRA for 2024/25 was included at Appendix 4.

In July 2023, the Council took the decision to match the average District Heating bill to the Ofgem price cap for July-September 2023. This was due to the volatile energy prices. It was proposed that this approach be continued for 2024-25.

Resolved:- (1) That the proposed 2024-25 Base Case Option C for the HRA Business Plan be approved.

(2) That the Business Plan will be reviewed annually to provide an updated financial position be noted.

(3) That Council dwelling rents be increased by 7.7% in 2024/25 (Option 3).

(4) That the Council should retain the policy of realigning rents on properties at below formula rent to the formula rent level when the property was re-let to a new tenant.

(5) That shared ownership rents be increased by 9.4% in 2024/25.

(6) That charges for garages and parking spaces, communal facilities, cooking gas and use of laundry facilities be increased by 6% in 2024/25.

(7) That the District Heating unit charge per Kwh be set at 15.27 pence per kwh, a decrease of 4.2% (0.67 pence per kwh).

(8) 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) That the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2024/25, as shown in Appendix 6, be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Allen

Seconder:- Councillor Alam

(Councillor McNeely declared a disclosable pecuniary interest on the grounds of being a Council tenant and was granted a dispensation to vote)

105. CALENDAR OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THE 2024-25 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Consideration was given to a report, submitted in accordance with the rules of procedure as detailed in the Council's Constitution, that set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

Resolved:- That the calendar of meetings for the 2024-25 Municipal Year be approved.

Mover: - Councillor Allen

Seconder: - Councillor Read

106. MALTBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUM OUTCOME

Consideration was given to the report that had been submitted seeking approval for the Maltby Neighbourhood Development Plan to be adopted as part of the Statutory Development Plan for Rotherham Borough after the proposed plan had been supported in a referendum held on Thursday, 8th February, 2024.

It was noted that the Localism Act (2011) allowed for local communities to prepare plans and strategies for development in their area called Neighbourhood Plans that had given Parish Councils and local communities the power to write their own plans and to take more control of planning policy for their areas.

Councillor Tinsley confirmed this plan had been seven years in the making. Maltby residents democratically voted for the acceptance of this plan, which focussed on affordable housing and for more money to be spent in Maltby and deal with more takeaways on Maltby High Street.

Resolved:- (1) That the outcome of the Maltby Neighbourhood Plan Referendum as set out at paragraph 1.5 of the report submitted be noted.

(2) That the Maltby Neighbourhood Development Plan be adopted as part of the statutory development plan for Rotherham Borough.

Mover:- Councillor Lelliott

Seconder:- Councillor Bird

(Councillor Tinsley declared an interest on the grounds of being a Maltby Town Councillor)

107. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR DALTON AND THRYBERGH

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

An update report had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester introduced the report and commented on:-

- The improved facilities and opportunities for children, young people and families.
- Building on strong empowered neighbourhoods that value diversity.
- Ensuring neighbourhoods were safe, clean, tidy and celebrated.
- Contributed to the improvement of health and wellbeing of local citizens.
- Thanked the Housing Team and Jo Talbot Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, his Ward Colleague, Councillor Baker-Rogers and Councillor Allen for the Neighbourhood Working agenda.
- Work with High Greave School and with external agencies and partnerships.

Councillor Baker-Rogers further reported on:-

- Instilling civic-pride and the CAP meetings to understand the difficulties residents are facing.
- Action taken and focusing on anti-social behaviour hotspots, holding local engagement days, increasing Police presence and undertaking leaflet drops so residents know who to call.
- Success in community payback including painting of play area in East Herringthorpe.
- Undertaking speed watches at several locations in the Ward.
- Providing a facility for residents who did not have transport to visit the recycling centre.
- Outdoor focal point to meeting communities to improve wellbeing.
- Towns and Village Fund to provide an opportunity at Ridgeway Community Gardens of which pupils of Trinity Croft School assisted with the planning.

- Thanks for Councillor Bennett-Sylvester in his attendance at litter picks.
- The play area in East Herringthorpe.
- Work with Parish Councils.
- Thanking Jo Talbot for all of her hard work.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

Mover:- Councillor Bennett-Sylvester Second:- Councillor Baker-Rogers

**108. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD
COUNCILLORS FOR SITWELL**

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

An update report had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Griffin introduced the report and commented on:-

- Continue working with partners to mitigate the impact of flooding.
- Work with local partners to improve provision for both young people/elderly.
- Work with partners to improve the environment.
- Road safety/traffic.
- Crime/Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Strong and effective team work with Neighbourhood Team and PCSOs.
- Multi-agency clean-up of Whiston Brook.
- Whiston Youth Club.
- Large numbers of elderly people in the ward and supported through coffee mornings and bowling clubs, with more to do in this area.

Councillor Fisher further reported on:-

- The aim to support health and wellbeing of residents.
- Creating a new walk at Whiston Meadows and provided funding for two gates and a stile and two information posts at the site.
- Engagement with Rotherham Y3A.
- Supported improvements to Herringthorpe Valley Park and the surrounding woodland.
- Towns and Villages Teams to improve both Stag and Worrygoose roundabouts.
- Continue to work with all agencies to tackle crime.
- Engaged with local schools and contributed to IT equipment and supported variety of projects.

Councillor Burnett rounded up the Ward Report by adding:-

- Each of the three Ward Councillors were newly elected in 2021 and the support of the Neighbourhood Team had been excellent.
- Sitwell Ward been put first and the three Councillors had not entered into party politics which meant plans for the area were supported.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.

Mover:- Councillor Griffin

Seconder:- Councillor Fisher

109. NOTICE OF MOTION:- TRANSPARENCY AND GOVERNANCE

Moved by Councillor Bacon and seconded by Councillor Ball

That this Council:-

1. Notes that good practice on all aspects of governance, lead to better outcomes for both the public and the authority.
2. Believes that effective scrutiny leads to enhanced governance and accountability, leading to better outcomes for people the Local Authority serves. In order to achieve this, the Council will look at a range of best practices other local and regional authorities administer.
3. Believes that increasing public engagement, and comprehension, is important for the democratic process. Therefore, most aspects of our governance arrangements should be easily comprehended.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:-

1. During meetings of the full Council, afford the right of the Leader of the Opposition to question the Leader of the Council following the 'Leader's statement' via a new agenda item, on all matters, notwithstanding any agenda items or statement, perpetually for a period of no longer than 10 minutes.
 - 1.1. Subsequently, afford the right of the Leader of the third largest group to question the Leader of the Council via a new agenda item, on all matters, notwithstanding any agenda items or statement, perpetually for a period of no longer than 5 minutes.
2. That the Leader of the Council attend the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board quarterly, for scrutiny on all matters, notwithstanding any agenda items, via a new agenda item 'Leader Scrutiny'. Reflecting the scrutiny practice that currently takes place on the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Board.

3. Upgrade existing chamber camera system, to record meetings in at least 1080P HD to improve video quality of webcasts and enhance public scrutiny and user experience.
 4. Streamline the user experience of members of the public looking for their local Councillor on Rotherham Council's website by bringing the 'Member index' segment into the 'Home' section via a direct link.
 5. During meetings of the full Council, arrange the seating order of Councillors strategically, increasing public comprehension of the political make-up of the Council, by reflecting this makeup across the chamber, not just on one side. Mirroring the 'front & backbenches' system other authorities use.
- 5.1. That the Leader of the Opposition sit opposite the Leader of the Council, adjacent to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and so on, in consultation with all political group leaders.

On being put to the vote, the motion fell.

110. NOTICE OF MOTION:- LITTLE LONDON

Moved by Councillor Tinsley and seconded by Councillor Ball

The Little London Estate was built to house munition workers during World War two for the nearby Royal Ordnance Factory Maltby. Two of the Streets were named after Parliamentary Ministers one being Churchill Avenue and the other Morrison Avenue. The houses of a flat roof design was only designed to have a lifespan of around thirty years. The estate is largely owned by two landlords with pockets of independent landlords. Work on the majority of the Rivergrove properties were carried out to bring them up to meet HHSRS Standards. Although the properties are known to suffer chronically from damp issues and leaky roofs.

Works to refurbish properties were undertaken back in 2016 leaving two blocks of houses unfinished and derelict. The houses have caused anti-social behaviour and suffer from fly tipping along with rife with rodents. The landlord has submitted a full application to demolish the properties and rebuild. Although there is little confidence from residents that this will be conducted and could prolong the blight and issues in the area.

In the past the Council has tried to compulsory purchase the properties previously but failed in this process. We believe the Council should re-engage to try and purchase the properties and bring this before OSMB and the Full Council.

This Council notes:-

1. The Estate of Little London has been blighted by derelict houses for at least the last 8 years.
2. As of May 2021, the derelict properties were openly accessible to the public and were causing instances of ASB and fires. Both Ward Councillors Adam Tinsley and Lee Hunter have been proactive working with officers for action on the estate. Including pushing the need for the properties being secured back in 2021 and the surrounding area tidied up.
3. Big Power for London Group have championed the need for improvements for improved housing conditions on the housing and around the surrounding estate.
4. With occupied houses on the estate being “brought up to HHSRS Standards” the Council and the landlord are operating under a special arrangement. Where the need for the area being put under selective licencing wasn’t necessitated.
5. The landlord has recently made a full application to demolish and rebuild the properties.

This Council believes:-

1. That by the Council becoming a stakeholder in the estate it would create more Council housing locally, improve property standards, remove the derelict housing that has been a blight on the estate and would restore community pride in the area.

This Council resolves to:-

1. The Council should open negotiations with the landlord to purchase the derelict properties with or without planning. Any proposal by the Council to purchase is to be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the full Council to scrutinise and vote on.

An amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Read and seconded by Councillor Andrews:-

“The Little London Estate was built to house munition workers during World War two for the nearby Royal Ordnance Factory Maltby. Two of the Streets were named after Parliamentary Ministers one being Churchill Avenue and the other Morrison Avenue. The Houses of a flat roof design was only designed to have a lifespan of around thirty years. The estate is largely owned by two landlords with pockets of independent landlords. Work on the majority of the Rivergrove properties were carried out to bring

them up to meet HHSRS Standards. Although the properties are known to suffer chronically from damp issues and leaky roofs.

Works to refurbish properties were undertaken back in 2016 leaving two blocks of houses unfinished and derelict. The houses have caused Anti-social behaviour and suffer from fly tipping along with rife with rodents. The landlord has submitted a full application to demolish the properties and rebuild. Although there is little confidence from Residents that this will be conducted and could prolong the blight and issues in the area.

In the past the Council have tried to compulsory purchase the properties previously but failed in this process. We believe the council should reengage to try and purchase the properties and bring this before OSMB and the Full Council.

This Council notes:-

The Estate of little London has been blighted by derelict houses for at least the last 8 years.

As of May 2021, the derelict properties were openly accessible to the public and were causing instances of ASB and fires. Both Ward Councillors Adam Tinsley and Lee Hunter have been proactive working with officers for action on the estate. Including pushing the need for the properties being secured back in 2021 and the surrounding area tidied up.

Big Power for London Group have championed the need for improvements for improved housing conditions on the housing and around the surrounding estate.

With occupied houses on the estate being “brought up to HHSRS Standards “the council and the landlord are operating under a special arrangement. Where the need for the area being put under selective licencing wasn’t necessitated.

The landlord has recently made a full application to demolish and rebuild the properties.

[INSERT:]

In the last six months, the Council has begun to undertake a proactive programme of inspections of privately rented properties on the estate, surveying residents about the difficulties that they face, exterminating vermin, and meeting regularly with the Big Power group.

[END]

The Council believes:-

That by the Council becoming a stakeholder in the estate it would create more Council housing locally, improve property standards, remove the derelict housing that has been a blight on the estate and would restore community pride in the area.

The Council resolves to:-

[DELETE]

~~**The Council should open negotiations with the landlord to purchase the derelict properties with or without planning. Any proposal by the Council to purchase is to be reported back to OSMB and the full Council to scrutinise and vote on.**~~

[END]

[INSERT]

Honour the intention set out in the Cabinet report of July 2016 to purchase derelict properties on Churchill Avenue, subject to the necessary Legal and Procurement requirements, in such a way that meet the requirement to ensure Best Value for the taxpayer.

The decision making around this process will be subject to the Council's formal Scrutiny processes in the usual way, and so can be considered based on the request of any individual Councillor.

[END]

On being put to the vote, the amendment was approved and became the substantive motion which now read:-

The Little London Estate was built to house munition workers during World War two for the nearby Royal Ordnance Factory Maltby. Two of the Streets were named after Parliamentary Ministers one being Churchill Avenue and the other Morrison Avenue. The Houses of a flat roof design was only designed to have a lifespan of around thirty years. The estate is largely owned by two landlords with pockets of independent landlords. Work on the majority of the Rivergrove properties were carried out to bring them up to meet HHSRS Standards. Although the properties are known to suffer chronically from damp issues and leaky roofs.

Works to refurbish properties were undertaken back in 2016 leaving two blocks of houses unfinished and derelict. The houses have caused Anti-social behaviour and suffer from fly tipping along with rife with rodents. The landlord has submitted a full application to demolish the properties and rebuild . Although there is little confidence from Residents that this will be conducted and could prolong the blight and issues in the area.

In the past the Council have tried to compulsory purchase the properties previously but failed in this process. We believe the council should reengage to try and purchase the properties and bring this before OSMB and the Full Council.

This Council notes:-

The Estate of little London has been blighted by derelict houses for at least the last 8 years.

As of May 2021, the derelict properties were openly accessible to the public and were causing instances of ASB and fires. Both Ward Councillors Adam Tinsley and Lee Hunter have been proactive working with officers for action on the estate. Including pushing the need for the properties being secured back in 2021 and the surrounding area tidied up.

Big Power for London Group have championed the need for improvements for improved housing conditions on the housing and around the surrounding estate.

With occupied houses on the estate being “brought up to HHSRS Standards “the council and the landlord are operating under a special arrangement. Where the need for the area being put under selective licencing wasn’t necessitated.

The landlord has recently made a full application to demolish and rebuild the properties.

In the last six months, the Council has begun to undertake a proactive programme of inspections of privately rented properties on the estate, surveying residents about the difficulties that they face, exterminating vermin, and meeting regularly with the Big Power group.

The Council believes:-

That by the Council becoming a stakeholder in the estate it would create more Council housing locally, improve property standards, remove the derelict housing that has been a blight on the estate and would restore community pride in the area.

The Council resolves to:-

Honour the intention set out in the Cabinet report of July 2016 to purchase derelict properties on Churchill Avenue, subject to the necessary Legal and Procurement requirements, in such a way that meet the requirement to ensure Best Value for the taxpayer.

The decision making around this process will be subject to the Council's formal Scrutiny processes in the usual way, and so can be considered based on the request of any individual councillor.

On being put to the vote, the substantive motion was carried.

111. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers

Secunder: Councillor Browne

112. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Roche

Secunder: Councillor Cusworth

113. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Board Sub-Committee be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Ellis

Secunder: Councillor Hughes

114. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Planning Board be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Bird

Secunder: Councillor Sheppard

115. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee on 12th February, 2024, including approving the Pay Policy Statement 2024-25 for publication under Chapter 8 of the Localism Act 2011 be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Alam

Secunder: Councillor Allen

116. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

(1) Councillor Elliott would receive a written response to his question as Councillor Haleem had left the meeting.

(2) Councillor Ball would receive a written response to his question as Councillor Haleem had left the meeting.

(3) Councillor Ball asked with the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service raising its precept, how would this impact the tax payers of Rotherham?

Councillor Wyatt explained that, as set out in the 2024/25 Annual Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting Report the option approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority on 19th February, 2024 of a 2.99% increase raised the precept to £85.05 for a band D property. This equated to an increase of less than 5p per week for a Band D household, noting the majority of properties in South Yorkshire were in Bands A or B meaning the annual and weekly increase would be less than that.

Approving this precept increase allowed the Fire and Rescue Authority to set a break-even budget by generating £1.2m of funding and avoids cuts to services totalling this value.

The Fire and Rescue Authority had budgeted to deliver £2.6m of efficiency savings in 2024/25 (reducing pay budgets by 2% and non-pay budgets by 9%). If the precept increase had not been approved the service would need to reduce investments in service improvements or its assets or generate further efficiency savings to the value of £1.2m.

In a supplementary question Councillor Ball confirmed there was money in reserves by investing in other places. Council Tax being raised increased further pressure yet the spokesperson attended the Fire Conference paid by service so what justified this for the taxpayers of Rotherham.

Councillor Wyatt confirmed both he and Councillor Ball had received the same papers and the same invitation.

117. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

(1) **Councillor Hoddinott** referred to the local Tory MP criticising the Towns and Villages Fund in Wickersley and Greasbrough which were not even in his constituency so asked should local residents not have their say instead?

Councillor Allen confirmed that everyone should be respectful and referred to the projects in the Towns and Villages Fund, which was developed locally and especially via locally elected Ward Members. In addition engagement and consultation happened with residents and businesses before the scheme started on site to ensure people could provide input and to develop and agree a scheme that local people and locally elected members approved.

The local neighborhoods teams worked across all parties and undertook consultations with local communities and local residents had their say. Feedback was positive and the well commented on illuminated clock tower at Wickersley was locally well regarded, a popular local landmark and produced delight.

The Greasbrough Scheme, the ward of both Councillors Allen and Elliott, worked with local people to turn ideas into reality and an innovative green corridor project had made a real difference to residents and in the neighbourhood.

It was suggested that it would be unwise of local politicians to contradict the views of local residents as they knew what was best for their own areas.

In a supplementary comment Councillor Hoddinott confirmed receipt of some positive feedback from residents so took the opportunity to thank Councillor Allen for the work in leading neighbourhoods and getting projects delivered all over the borough with residents being consulted on what they wanted.

(2) Councillor Monk explained that following announcements from the Government of a significant expansion of early education entitlement and asked how did the Council plan to ensure there was sufficient, high quality childcare and education to meet increased demand across the Borough.

Councillor Cusworth explained the Council developed an annual Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency Report 2023 which detailed the areas where it was projected that additional capacity may be needed to meet any anticipated demand. It was evident that there would be additional demand across the Borough where additional places would be required from September 2024 and September 2025 (when children from nine months old would be entitled to a free place).

The Government had given local authorities an amount of capital funding to increase capacity for both the Early Years entitlements and wraparound childcare programme but it was just £538,000 for Rotherham.

Officers had been working with the sector to develop the mechanisms to enable both schools and providers to access the funding available. The bidding process had been subject to extensive consultation and bids were now being invited in order to distribute the available funds quickly and equitably, in accordance with the national guidelines which had been provided.

Additionally work was ongoing with the Rotherham Inward Development Office to agree a business advice package for providers. In addition the Council was working with a range of partners to develop and implement a training and recruitment drive to increase the availability of Early Years staff.

The bidding process had been subject to extensive consultation. Bids were now being invited in order to distribute the available funds quickly and equitably, in accordance with the guidelines which have been provided.

(3) Councillor Reynolds asked did the Council still subsidise Magna?

Councillor Alam confirmed they did not.

Magna received loans from the Council in 2006 and 2008.

After a period of non-payment due to market conditions the Cabinet Member was pleased to say that Magna have made consistent repayments since April 2022. All accumulated interest had been paid off and the regular monthly payments covered both principal and interest.

In a supplementary question Councillor Reynolds asked if he could have the actual terms of agreement in writing?

Councillor Alam confirmed he would check first with the Monitoring Officer as to what could be released.

(4) Councillor Reynolds confirmed having secured (with the help of Commissioner Sir Derek Myers) £6.19 million from Theresa May for child sexual exploitation victims. He asked where had this money gone and what percentage did the victims get?

Councillor Read confirmed that in November 2015 Commissioners, led by Sir Derek Myers and the Leader of the Council, a one-off grant of £5.2m was received from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

As detailed within the business case agreed by the Government, the £5.2m was secured to improve the Council, but predominantly within that to improve and sustain Children's Services particularly the costs of increased numbers of Social Workers, funding for post-abuse support contracts with the voluntary and community sector and the implementation of a new social care computer system liquid logic.

In a supplementary question Councillor Reynolds asked how much went to the victims?

Councillor Read referred Councillor Reynolds to the agreement with the Government at the time for those purposes set out and agreed. This was not a fund to go to directly with survivors and was not primarily what the fund was for.

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(5) **Councillor Burnett** asked did the Labour administration support businesses both inside and outside Rotherham Town Centre?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed they did.

In a supplementary question Councillor Burnett asked if the Cabinet Member agreed with him that the Council needed to encourage small businesses such as Deer Farm Park rather than having empty premises in the Town Centre.

Councillor Lelliott confirmed the Council did need to support all businesses and thanked the Member for being able to provide the following information (which would also be provided in writing):-

Much of our business support activity was co-ordinated through the network of award-winning business hubs:-

- Matrix at Dinnington,;
- Fusion in Templeborough;
- Moorgate Crofts in the town centre; and
- Century in the Dearne Valley.

Allowing for support to businesses across the Borough, in the north, south and centre.

Last year the Council invested a further £6.5 million in a new hub at Century 2 which provided an additional sixteen offices, twenty workshops and two laboratory spaces for businesses to grow in Manvers.

Over the last 12 months the Council had:-

- Provided space in business hubs for **193 start-ups and SMEs** all of whom benefitted from the supportive environment of a fully managed service, with wrap around business support.
- The Adviser Team engaged with **527 businesses** across Rotherham on a range of issues - from business strategy, supply chain development, recruitment, digitalisation and many more.
- **Ran 75 workshops** on various business topics which had 359 attendees and also **supported 230 business start-up enquiries** through the Launchpad programme.
- Secured external funding to provide direct financial support to businesses that had allowed to agree **grant awards totalling £275,000**.
- In January this year secured funding for a **Rural Grants Programme** which provided grants of up to 50% for businesses in rural areas that have projects that could demonstrate a positive impact on the local economy and create jobs.

527 businesses engaged was the number of unique businesses against which interactions were recorded during 2023.

Grants in last 12 months included:-

- Productivity and Digitisation Grant: fifteen proceeding/paid (£161k)
- Business Support Grant: twelve proceeding/paid, three processing (£42k)
- Launchpad start-up grants: twenty proceeding/paid, eight processing (£35k); plus fifteen UKSE grants paid (£7.5k)
- Rural grants: three proceeding (£29k)
- Low Carbon: Pipeline of fifty-one businesses being engaged by a specialist consultant to complete energy audits (with funding available to implement carbon reduction measures).

(6) Councillor Hoddinott was surprised to discover there was no joint pathway between the Police and the NHS about how spiking incidents were dealt with, meaning many victims were not being given blood tests. She asked would the Community Safety Partnership commit to looking into this issue and possibly brokering a joined-up response?

Councillor Alam confirmed the Community Safety Partnership would commit to looking into this issue with a view to brokering a joined-up response. The Detective Superintendent of the Violence Reduction Unit, had confirmed there was a local agreement between the NHS and the Police, although this was not a formal pathway.

As each spiking case was unique, the Police did take a person-centred approach when incidents were reported, to determine the action required. The Detective Superintendent would take the question further and provide more details about the local procedures.

In a supplementary question Councillor Hoddinott would appreciate seeing those formal procedures and asked if the Community Safety Partnership could look at training and awareness raising.

Councillor Alam welcomed the feedback and would discuss this further with the Community Safety Partnership.

(7) Councillor Hoddinott asked if it was possible to report how many local authority maintained schools have a deficit budget this year?

Councillor Cusworth confirmed that based on the latest budget monitoring position there were five schools forecasting a deficit by the end of 2023/24.

In terms of school budgets approved in May 2023 the year had started with two schools having deficit budgets.

In a supplementary question Councillor Hoddinott asked of the five forecasting deficits this had a big impact on schools and particularly with those local authority maintained schools were the Council providing support to them.

Councillor Cusworth confirmed how difficult it was and had seen some of that first hand in the past, but the Children and Young People's Finance Team were working with schools in a deficit position with the aim of trying to bring finances into line. With rising costs and inflation this was even more concerning for schools, but if the Member wished to discuss this further the Cabinet Member was happy to meet further.

(8) Councillor Jones explained that earlier this month the Leader of the Council wrote to the Environment Agency asking them to clarify their position around BH5 at Droppingwell. He asked could the Leader explain the context of the letter and why he felt the need to send it, bearing in mind his comments at the November Council meeting.

The Leader confirmed he indeed did write to the Environment Agency in January 2024 and the content of the letter did include questions on Bore Hole 5. The Environment Agency had given different advice to different people at different times.

The primary purpose for letter was because that in written correspondence from the Environment Agency it seemed to be at odds with their previous position provided to the Council, which was that the lack of this Bore Hole in place was not critical to the operation of the permit. In fact, in June 2020 the Environment Agency wrote to the Council and stated 'failure to reinstate Bore Hole 5 was not critical in terms of permit regulation'. In December, 2020 the Environment Agency had this information on the website - ***then failure to reinstate BH05 is not critical in terms of permit regulation***

I received a response to my letter from the Environment Agency in the last few days that provides contradictory information to that previously provided to the Council and the public and the Environment Agency was now stating that they 'have concluded that monitoring from **BH5 is required** to assess cross-gradient impacts to groundwater quality.'

It was wholly unacceptable that the Council had been presented with information that is contradictory.

Droppingwell Tip only currently existed owing to a failure by the Environment Agency to properly deal with the Permit. The contradictory information that was now being presented indicated that the matter continued to be handled by the Environment Agency in a way that harmed the public confidence in all agencies that were required to deal with these issues. Indeed this Council has already passed a motion of no confidence in the Environment Agency.

Consideration was now being given to whether to commence the actions necessary to take legal action against the Environment Agency for the repeated and egregious failures in this case and also if there were grounds to seek Judicial Review of the approach taken.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones pointed out that the Bore Hole was also on a quality assurance map and from 2016 all these documents were publicly available. On this basis why did the Leader advise Members to vote against something that had not been properly investigated and would he now apologise to residents of Droppingwell.

The Leader confirmed he would not apologise. The Council have acted on the information that was available and would do everything needed to do to get to a better position.

(9) Councillor Jones referred to February's Improving Places meeting where the Senior Management Team admitted that the signposting and communication of the markets access restrictions were not carried out as well as they could have been so asked what had been done to correct this.

Councillor Lelliott confirmed it was recognized that the Council could have been clearer in communications and signposting.

To address this all tenants and traders since then have been visited individually to explain the changes and temporary signage installed pending the erection of site hoardings.

The Council had also publicised the changes to access with multiple posts over social media and on its website. In addition, the contractor was designing notice boards to be installed in prominent positions for both traders and the public of works forthcoming in the weeks ahead providing information on the progress of the works on site. A meeting was also to be arranged also to discuss this further.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones pointed out that bearing in mind the aspirations to take business along with us did the Cabinet Member not think we should be offering compensation to the four affected businesses?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed she would respond in writing once further discussion had taken place.

(10) Councillor Ball had left the meeting so would receive a response in writing to his question.

(11) Councillor Ball had left the meeting so would receive a response in writing to his question.

(12) Councillor Jones explained during the last year members have struggled to re-locate or even buy new CCTV to tackle issues within areas and this had also affected projects like the towns and villages work. He asked could the Cabinet Member please give an update on when the CCTV services would be back to normal.

Councillor Alam explained that through over £600,000 of investment provided by the Council, the amount of CCTV had quadrupled in efforts to improve safety and feelings of safety across the Borough.

The Council had committed to do a full review and audit of all cameras, which had now been completed. Requests were being processed again and a total of thirty-nine cameras were now ordered.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones pointed out that over the last twelve months several incidents have occurred where CCTV could have been a welcome asset for people's witness statements affecting investment into the towns and villages fund. He asked could the Cabinet Member, therefore, ensure that all outstanding orders and requests be completed prior to May, to accommodate those Member requests previously agreed.

Councillor Alam confirmed the appointment of a new manager who would deliver on commitments.

(13) Councillor Jones referred to in Rotherham West seeing a lack of primary age children's places with a lot of children now being asked to travel long distances to their nearest school with a space. He asked could the Cabinet Member tell him what was being done to address this issue.

Councillor Cusworth explained some schools in Rotherham were more popular with parents in the Borough. Some parents also crossed the boundaries of Rotherham to access provision. Despite this, there were sufficient places in each locality and regularly achieved in excess of 90% first choice admissions.

There was some limited oversubscription pressure resulting from the exercise of parental preference in Rotherham West and North. This affected three schools. School places were projected around local planning areas and the Local Authority was required to ensure that there were sufficient school places within the local planning area for all children who required one.

Any child requiring a school place in Rotherham West was able to be allocated one within a reasonable distance of two miles as specified by the DfE. Typically, the Council were able to allocate schools that were well within this distance. If Cllr Jones is aware of a specific example where this distance is exceeded, then this case can be considered by the Access to Education Team.

Although some schools within the Rotherham North and West planning area were oversubscribed, there were other local schools that have a number of surplus places available. As such, the Council was able to meet the statutory duty to provide school places and could not increase capacity at an individual school that was oversubscribed.

The Cabinet Member offered Councillor Jones the opportunity to meet outside of this meeting to discuss further.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones explained Rotherham West was one of the quickest expanding areas in the Borough. There were four primary schools without any capacity, crossing patrols or any crossing facilities. Parents were now being asked to walk children past the schools to get to their nearest school with a place so there was a need to make those journeys safer. He asked why had any of the road safety schemes not been approved.

Councillor Cusworth confirmed this was her area of responsibility, so would endeavour to set up a meeting with Councillor Jones and relevant officers to discuss further.

(14) Councillor Ball had left the meeting so would receive a response in writing to his question.

(15) Councillor Ball had left the meeting so would receive a response in writing to his question.

(16) Councillor Tinsley referred to the Maltby Restoration Scheme which was being undertaken by the same owners that owned Droppingwell. He asked what confidence did the Council have that these operators were keeping to current planning conditions and environmental permits?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that Community Protection Officers were aware of the work towards the Maltby Restoration Scheme. Both Planning and Community Protection had enforcement powers and were monitoring the progress of the work. The Environment Agency was the permitting authority and had a monitoring and enforcement role in this scheme. If breaches of conditions or legislation were identified, appropriate enforcement would be progressed.

In a supplementary question Councillor Tinsley asked if the Council had powers to monitor from a planning perspective and was it being actively monitored?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed the Council was aware of the taking place and undertaken by MHH, which was a private contract in which Council had no role. If there was any breach in legislation the Council would take enforcement action.

(17) Councillor Ball had left the meeting so would receive a response in writing to his question.

(18) Councillor Tinsley pointed out after multiple requests for road resurfacing on Queens Corner Maltby, the Council continued to fill the same potholes with temporary shovel pat repairs. He asked would the Council commit to proper repairs on this busy junction?

The Leader confirmed the extensive repair of the A631 High Street junction with B6427 Muglet Lane Maltby had been included on a forward programme alongside other roads also requiring repair of a similar condition.

What he could not give at this stage was a date for these repairs, but did confirm the forward programme would be reviewed as the Highway Repair Programme for 2024/25 progressed.

In a supplementary question Councillor Tinsley asked if the commitment could be sooner as these repairs did not last long. This was a busy road and with extra houses, a bus lane and heavy traffic travelling along it which had featured on a 999 ambulance show, could this be given serious attention.

The Leader confirmed this would be reviewed as part of the forward programme of works.

118. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for consideration.