

**COUNCIL MEETING
9th April, 2025**

Present:- The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Sheila Cowen) (in the Chair); Councillors Ismail, Ahmed, Allen, Bacon, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Beresford, Blackham, Brent, A. Carter, C. Carter, Clarke, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Currie, Cusworth, Duncan, Elliott, Foster, Garnett, Hall, Harper, Havard, Hughes, Hussain, Jackson, Jones, Keenan, Knight, Lelliott, Marshall, Mault, McKiernan, Monk, Rashid, Read, Reynolds, Ryalls, Sheppard, Steele, Sutton, Tarmey, Taylor, Thorp, Williams and Yasseen.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

136. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised that Christine Lunn MBE had recently celebrated her 50th year in fostering as part of the Rotherham Fostering Team. During this time she had fostered over 250 children in care. Ms Lunn had also recently celebrated her 80th birthday. Members joined the Mayor in a round of applause.

The Mayor had recently hosted a number of local schools and community groups in the Mayor's Parlour. The full Mayoral activity details were contained in Appendix A of the Mayor's Letter.

137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Resolved: That apologies for absence be received from Councillor Adair, Alam, Ball, Bower, Fisher, Pitchley and Stables and Tinsley.

138. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 5 March 2025.

Councillor Thorp asked a question in relation to Minute 134 – Members' Questions to Cabinet Members and Chairpersons which stated that "Officers were liaising with the Central Neighbourhood Policing Team" regarding Broom Lane crossing. Councillor Thorp asked who specifically had been contacted in the Police.

The Leader confirmed he would find out and provide a written response.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 5 March 2025 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Cusworth

139. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the two petitions that had been received since the last Council meeting. The petitions were titled:

1. Petition to lower the Speed Limit from 40mph to 30mph on Sheffield Road / Park Hill in Swallownest for Community Safety. (21 Valid Signatures)
2. Proposed Selective Licensing Scheme for 2025-30 and the impact on the Clifton Community. (103 Valid Signatures)

The lead petitioner for the Sheffield Road/Park Hill petition, Ms Sheward, did not attend the meeting however it was confirmed that she would receive a written response from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment within 10 working days in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The lead petitioner for the Selective Licensing Scheme petition, Mr Shafiq, attended the Council meeting and presented his petition. It was confirmed that Mr Shafiq would receive a written response from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment within 10 working days in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Council receive the petitions listed at paragraph 2.1 of the report and the lead petitioners or their representatives be entitled to address the Council for a total period of five minutes in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme.
3. That the relevant Strategic Director be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Friday 25 April 2025.

140. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to record.

141. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were 6 public questions:

1. Mr Bashir: Following my questions at both the last Council and Cabinet meetings in March, I have not received the alleged process documentation under which the Palestinian art exhibition was censored. Afterwards there was a resignation by Deputy Council Leader, Councillor Sheppard, nevertheless could you please let me

know a time frame that you will be able to provide the process documentation?

The Leader apologised for the delay in forwarding a response. He had only recently received it, but he assured Mr Bashir that it would be sent in the next few days. The Leader did explain that having read the document, it was clear that it was out of date, and it did not meet the need required. As such it would be reviewed.

In his supplementary, Mr Bashir asked the Leader to explain how censoring and excluding the art made with the little hands of Rotherham children and young people as well as Rotherham adults was in keeping with the Children's Capital of Culture campaign.

The Leader explained that the art was not censored. The Council had to have processes in place for approving what was exhibited in its libraries. Paperwork had to be completed with the relevant details and that then had to be signed off by a manager within the service. In this case, the paperwork was not done and there was no management sign off so it should not have been there in the first place.

2. Mr Iqbal: Aside from the failure of forthright cooperation in the Palestinian Flag raising incident, of 29th of November S2024 that I personally extended the invitation request to you in the Cabinet meeting of 14th October 2024, what cultural activities or events which were in the attached appendix of the 22 OSMB recommendations to the cabinet, have you completed?

The Leader explained that there were seven recommendations to Cabinet from the Petition with some sub-recommendations. All recommendations had been accepted and actioned. There had been reference to further events, but it was the Leaders understanding that the relevant cultural activities and events from petitioners would be put forward to the Cabinet Spokesperson from the nominated lead petitioner and, as yet, none had been received.

In his supplementary, Mr Iqbal referenced the flag raising event and asked for a Freedom of Information request for the invitation request email sent to the Mayor, Councillor Sheila Cowen, on 15 September 2024 and for any additional invitations preceding the flag raising event on 29 November 2024 in Councillor Cowen's capacity as either a Councillor or as Mayor. Mr Iqbal also wanted an explanation of what happens if the Council failed to be accurate in an FOI request response. He confirmed that an email would be sent to the stand-in Cabinet spokesperson with the email address the invitation was originally sent from and with a copy of his questions for accuracy.

The Leader explained that Mr Iqbal was entitled to make a Freedom of Information request and there was a process for that that he should go through. Details of the team would be provided in a written response.

3. Ms Boote: Can the Council explain in detail the Freedom of Information Request Procedure?

Councillor Alam was not present at the meeting to answer so a written response would be provided.

4. Mr Ashraf: Oxford City Council has passed a motion supporting Divestment from Israel, citing the International Court of Justice rulings of the live-streamed Ethnic Cleansings and Genocide, despite the Council Solicitor's repeated protestations of its impossibility. What in detail would be the practical steps for Rotherham Borough Council to do the same?

The Leader explained that, in Rotherham, the Council would not pass motions that would mean committing itself to break the law. That was a matter of principle. Other Council's did not have that as a rule and did pass such motions but that meant they would then be unable to deliver the actions they had committed to. Rotherham Council staff would not be directed to break the law. The law was what the Monitoring Officer said the law was and this was the same for all Council's.

In his supplementary question, Mr Ashraf stated that there was some legal advice that showed a possible way of overcoming that. Mr Ashraf thanked the Leader for the answer and for his responses to emails. He thanked the Mayor for her forbearance.

5. Mr Abdulkarim: Could you explain in detail the process of Councillors discharging their duty including the length of time that is served at the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority?

The Leader explained that the role of South Yorkshire Pensions Authority was to deliver a sustainable and cost effective pension scheme for members and employers in South Yorkshire, and the overriding responsibility of individual members was to ensure that the organisation acted in the best interests of the present and future beneficiaries of the scheme.

All members of the Pensions Authority were requested to attend 5 meetings of the full authority each year. These meetings took a full day, and the day generally included a training session or briefing on specific issues. In addition, members could be appointed to the Audit and Governance Committee which involved attendance at 4 half day meetings per year. S41 members and a number of other members (so as to ensure political balance) were also appointed to the Staffing and Appointments and Appeals Committees which met on an ad hoc basis but usually about twice a year.

Depending on the business these meetings could be for either a full or half day.

Members of the Authority were expected to prepare for meetings through reading Authority meeting papers which generally were at least 100 pages long.

There was an obligation on members appointed to the Authority to maintain a level of knowledge and understanding of pension matters. Based on information provided by the Pensions Regulator, it was estimated that this should require a minimum of 20 hours per year and the Authority organised a full day event to support this which was in addition to other training sessions already mentioned. In addition, members were expected to utilise an online learning system to achieve an initial level of knowledge and then enhance it through the system as new issues emerged. In addition, the Authority provided support for members to attend conferences and other external events in order to build their knowledge and to develop relationships with councillors from elsewhere performing similar roles. New members to the Authority were provided with a supported induction to enable them to achieve the minimum level of knowledge and understanding within 3 months of joining the Authority.

In addition to the above the Chair of the Authority represented the Authority on the Border to Coast Joint Committee, which required attendance at 4 full day meetings each year together with a variable number of online meetings of around 2 hours duration of which there were 4 in the last municipal year.

In his supplementary, Mr Abdulkarim asked how the Rotherham representatives, Councillors Sutton, Fisher and Beresford could receive public representations and how did they take into account the views of Rotherham workers whose wages partially funded the pension scheme and Rotherham taxpayers who also partially funded the pension scheme.

The Leader explained that their contact details were available online. The Leader was clear that the role of the representatives was to ensure the return on the pension fund on behalf of people who held pensions, within the law. It was not a political role in that regard.

6. Mr Smart: For the previous financial year, in detail how much deferred wages of workers as well as how much taxpayer money to top up the pensions of the Council workers etc was given to South Yorkshire Pensions Authority?

The Leader explained that for 2023/24 the Authority had collected £78.1m in contributions from scheme members (referred to as deferred pay in the question) and £314.2m in contributions from employers. The employer contribution figures appeared inflated due to decisions by two of the District Councils to make prepayments of contributions for the full three-year valuation period amounting to

£136.6m). The employer contribution figure was after the repayment of £39.7m of the surplus in the pension fund to employers with a surplus on their portion of the fund. Figures for 2024/25 were currently being prepared and would be available in the Authority's accounts which would be published in draft in line with the statutory timetable.

In his supplementary, Mr Smart asked, in itemised detail for the past two financial years, how much money from Rotherham and South Yorkshire workers and taxpayers was spent on Israeli Government Bonds as well as weapon manufacturers and other companies that perpetuated the live streamed occupation, apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide in Palestine as evidenced by the International Criminal Court and various other Human Rights bodies and organisations.

The Leader explained that he did not have that information to hand, but a written response would be provided.

142. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

143. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader was invited to present his statement. He started by recording his thanks to Councillor Sheppard for his service as Deputy Leader of the Labour Group and of the Council, following his decision to leave the Labour Party.

It was announced that Councillor Cusworth had been appointed as the new Deputy Leader of the Council and that she would continue to lead on Children's Services. Further announcements regarding Cabinet portfolios and appointments would be made in the coming days.

The Leader confirmed that a preferred candidate had been chosen to be the new Chief Executive by a cross-party appointment panel. For employment reasons details could not yet be disclosed but it was expected that a report would be brought to the Council meeting on 21 May 2025.

The Leader expressed his delight that the current Chief Executive had been shortlisted for the Municipal Journal Chief Executive of the Year. The Housing Service had also been shortlisted for two awards relating to the East Herringthorpe Energy Efficient development and the Small Sites Homebuilding Initiative. Member congratulated all involved.

The Leader highlighted the following:

- Sport England grant to help Rotherham tackle high levels of inactivity – the Council was set to receive more than £455,870 for a range of programmes to increase physical activity levels amongst residents.
- The Rotherham Apprenticeship Live Event took place on 12 March at the New York Stadium.
- The Employment Solutions Job Fair had taken place on 21 March.
- Work was underway at Clifton Park Water Splash which was the largest free water splash in the country.

Councillor Z Collingham offered his congratulations to Councillor Cusworth and the Chief Executive. He referenced the Employment Solutions Service and the recently announced funding from the DWP aimed at helping people back into work. Councillor Collingham asked if work was being done to avoid duplication. He also asked if the Leader and Council would take a stance against the proposed Whitestone Solar Farm development that would impact a large number of residents in the Rother Valley for the majority of the lifetimes.

The Leader explained that he believed the Council needed the Employments Solutions Service and the Pathways to Work scheme. The Economic Inactivity Rate in Rotherham was higher than the national average and higher than anywhere else in South Yorkshire. If the Leader thought the Council was being wasteful, it would of course revisit the matter, but it was his belief that the extra funding was needed on top of the agreed budget investment. In relation to Whitestone Solar Farm, the Leader confirmed that he would be informed by local representatives on the matter, but he expected the Council to raise the concerns of residents as part of the consultation.

Councillor Currie was pleased that Councillor Cusworth had been appointed as Deputy Leader as he believed that the role of Deputy Leader should always sit with the portfolio holder responsible for Children and Young People. Councillor Currie believed this was good practice following the publication of the Jay Report.

The Leader confirmed that he could not make a commitment in perpetuity that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People would always be the Deputy Leader. That had not been the case for a number of years prior to Councillor Cusworth appointment.

144. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 17 March 2025.

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 17 March 2025 be received.

Mover: Councillor Read

Second: Councillor Cusworth

145. NOMINATIONS - MAYOR-ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR-ELECT FOR THE 2025-26 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Nominations had been invited for the positions of Mayor-Elect and Deputy Mayor-Elect for the 2025-26 Municipal Year.

One nomination for the position of Mayor had been received:-

“That Councillor Ismail be elected Chair of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing (2025/26) Municipal Year and that she be entitled to the style of Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Proposer:- Councillor Read

Second:- Councillor Cusworth

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

Councillor Ismail was appointed Mayor-Elect for the 2025-26 Municipal Year. Her election as Mayor would take place at the Annual Meeting on 16 May 2025.

There had been three nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor-Elect:

“That Councillor Rashid be elected Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing (2025/26) Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Mover:- Councillor Steele

Second:- Councillor Ahmed

“That Councillor Currie be elected Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing (2025/26) Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Mover:- Councillor Bennett-Sylvester

Second:- Councillor Ryalls

“That Councillor Tinsley be elected Vice-Chair of the Rotherham Borough Council for the ensuing (2025/26) Municipal Year and that he be entitled to the style of Deputy Mayor by virtue of Section 245(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Mover:- Councillor Z. Collingham

Second:- Councillor Bacon

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the nominations were voted on in reverse order of receipt.

The Conservative Group nomination for Councillor Tinsley was lost.

The Independent Members nomination for Councillor Currie was lost.

The Labour Group nomination for Councillor Rashid was carried and Councillor Rashid was appointed Deputy Mayor-Elect for the 2025-26 Municipal Year. His election as Deputy Mayor would take place at the Annual Meeting on 16 May 2025.

146. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD UPDATE - APRIL 2025

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the activities of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Bodies in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14. The report set out the various pieces of scrutiny that had been undertaken. The four appendices were the Work Programme's for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Health Select Commission, Improving Lives Select Commission and Improving Places Select Commission respectively.

In moving the report, Councillor Steele highlighted the work that had been done on scrutinising the 2025-26 Budget proposals. There had been two Call-in's since the last update was presented and a number of reviews had progressed. Councillor Steele thanked all members and officers involved in scrutiny for their work.

In seconding the report, Councillor Bacon stated that further work needed to be done in order to improve the effectiveness of scrutiny. He hoped there would be more opportunities for an open question and answer session with the Leader during scrutiny meetings.

Resolved:

That Council receive the report and note the updates.

Mover: Councillor Steele

Seconder: Councillor Bacon

147. CABINET'S RESPONSE TO OUTCOMES FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD RELATING TO THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER'S TAKEOVER CHALLENGE - HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Consideration was given to the report which presented Cabinet's response to the findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review – OSMB Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge – Health and Wellbeing. The Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge (CCTOC) was a national initiative, where children and young people took over an

organisation or meeting and assumed management / leadership roles. As part of the Council's commitment to the CCTOC, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) supported Rotherham Youth Cabinet (RYC), in undertaking a focused piece of work on a topic chosen by the young people.

The OSMB Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge held on 17 October 2024, was chaired by Alex G, from the Rotherham Youth Cabinet. Rotherham Youth Cabinet chose Health and Wellbeing as the theme for this year's takeover challenge, as it was identified as an issue nationally and locally within their manifesto's aims, following consultation with over 4,000 young people. The recommendations from the sub-group were presented to Cabinet on 14 January 2025, and Cabinet approved their response on 17 March.

12 recommendations were accepted and Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report set out further detail on how the recommendations had been or would be actioned. Where recommendations were made for schools, the Council was able to accept the recommendation on behalf of maintained schools. Recommendation 5, that consideration was given to how the provision of a dedicated youth space for young people could be achieved, for example, a development of a space similar to the Barnsley Youth Zone, would require significant capital and revenue investment that was beyond the Council's capabilities at present. It would also have meant that all the Council's resource was centred in one area and not distributed across the Borough. Therefore, this recommendation was not accepted at the time.

As Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Councillor Steele thanked Scrutiny Officers for their work in organising the takeover meeting. He also thanked the Youth Cabinet for their hard work during the meeting and in forming the recommendations.

Councillor Bacon asked how the Council would listen to young people. Councillor Cusworth explained that the Children and Young People's Partnership would continue to put the voice of children and young people first. The Partnership would also feed into the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Resolved:

That Council note the response to the recommendations, as detailed in Appendix 1, and note the report.

Mover: Councillor Cusworth

Seconder: Councillor Baker-Rogers

148.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS

Consideration was given to the report which presented a number of amendments to various parts of the Council's Constitution. The proposed amendments were identified through discussions with Members of the

Constitution Working Group as a means of improving the Council's governance regime as set out in the papers and recommended to Council as a part of that process.

The first proposal set out in the report related to the Budget Council meeting. The proposal was that the agenda for this Council meeting be limited to the Council's Budget and Council Tax Setting and agreement of the new Municipal Meeting Calendar. There would be the ability for urgent items to be considered by exception.

The second proposal at paragraph 2.5 of the report related to Procedure Rule 11 – General questions by Members at Council meetings. The proposals included setting a time limit on the relevant agenda items and on supplementary questions. A limit on the number of questions that could be submitted would be included but there would be a provision for written questions to be included in the minutes of the meeting.

The third proposal at paragraph 2.6 of the report related to Procedure Rule 12 – General questions by members of the public at Council meetings. The proposals included setting a twenty minute time limit for this agenda item and a one minute time limit for supplementary questions.

The fourth proposal at paragraph 2.7 of the report relating to Procedure Rule 18 – Notice of motions, order of motions, consideration of motions and unconnected business. It was proposed that the length of speeches be reduced, the deadline for receipt of amendments be brought forward to the day prior to the meeting and that an overall time limit of 90 minutes be introduced to cover all notices of motion. It was also proposed that the ability for Members and Groups to submit an amendment to their own Motion be removed. Further, there was a proposal to amend Procedure Rule 18(6). The purpose of the amendment was to ensure that any motion was properly moved and seconded before the debate or substantive introduction of the item.

The fifth proposal related to the Leader's Statement as outlined in paragraph 2.10 of the report. The proposal was to amend the Constitution to offer the Majority Opposition Leader the opportunity to respond to the Leader's Statement as the first Member called for a period of not more than 10 minutes and for the Leader of the Council to respond to the Majority Opposition Leader's comments before moving to all Member questions on the statement for a period of not more than 10 minutes.

A new appendix was to be included within the Constitution setting out the Terms of Reference of each of the bodies listed in Appendix 2 of the report. Changes to the Scheme of Delegation were proposed and the suggested wording for these changes was set out in paragraphs 2.14 and 2.15 of the report.

Paragraphs 2.16 and 2.17 outlined the proposals to make changes to the current Terms of Reference relating to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Select commissions. The proposed changes were intended to clearly align with changes in statutory guidance including the ability to question statutory partners and representatives of other partner agencies and public bodies about their views on issues, activities and proposals affecting the Borough, specifically reference the Council's scheme for handling petitions, and should the threshold for debate at Council be reached the ability for the petitions referral to overview and scrutiny, remove duplication and align with current Council structures.

In moving the report the Leader highlighted the changes and the reasons for them. In seconding the report, Councillor Z Collingham stated that the rules had needed strengthening and that no one group or independent had got everything they wanted.

Councillor Yasseen was against the proposals. She stated that they were anti-democratic, reduced openness and transparency and limited the voice of elected Members.

Councillor Beck supported the proposals which he felt were sensible and struck the correct balance. In response to a question, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Council could vote to suspend the Standing Orders if they felt the need to.

Councillor Bacon was pleased that the Leader of the Opposition would get more recognition.

The Leader disagreed with Councillor Yasseen and stated that the Council was still open and transparent. The changes were done for practical reasons.

Resolved:

That Council approve:-

1. The amendments to Appendix 1 – Council Procedure Rules.
2. The inclusion of a new appendix – Appendix 2 - Council Bodies.
3. The revised delegations including in respect of Company and Share Holding Responsibilities.
4. The amendments to Appendix 3 – Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Select Commissions Terms of Reference.
5. The amendments to Appendix 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

6. The amendments to Appendix 5 – Rotherham Borough Council Responsibility for Functions Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Z Collingham

149. NOTICE OF MOTION - SELECTIVE LICENSING

An amendment to the original motion was accepted by the mover and seconder of the original Motion and, therefore, further to Procedure Rule 18(14) the amendment was incorporated into the Motion for debate (inclusions highlighted in bold italics).

The original Motion was moved by Councillor Bennett-Sylvester and seconded by Councillor Currie. The amendment was moved by Councillor Z Collingham and seconded by Councillor Baum-Dixon.

The substantive motion was therefore:

That this Council:

Believes that Selective Licensing can, ***[insert] with appropriate implementation and consultation,*** be an effective tool for raising standards in the private rented housing sector.

A second amendment had been submitted. It was moved by Councillor Adam Carter and seconded by Councillor Charlotte Carter:

[Insert]

Background

Selective Licencing was introduced as a tool for local authorities in the Housing Act (2004) and subsequent amendments, to address a range of concerns relating to private rented accommodation.

That this Council:

1. Believes that selective licensing can be an effective tool for raising standards in the private rented housing sector.

[Insert]

2. ***Notes the findings of the Independent Review of the Use and Effectiveness of Selective Licencing, commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2019. Including the following points on the effectiveness of selective licencing:***

- *That there is “considerable variation in the effectiveness of individual selective licencing schemes” throughout England, with some “not achieving tangible, positive results to the same degree as others”.*
 - *That “when implemented in isolation, the effect of selective licencing is often limited” and that schemes “tend to be more successful when implemented as part of a wider, well planned coherent initiative with associated commitment of resources” (as is consistent with the wording of the Housing Act).*
3. *Welcomes the introduction of the Renters’ Rights Bill which is likely to become law later this year and will incorporate a ‘Decent Homes Standard’ with associated enforcement powers that could be used against negligent landlords. Council notes and believes that the Renter’s Rights Bill will address many of the concerns that have driven the trend towards Selective Licencing.*
4. *Believes that Selective Licencing, if not managed correctly in Rotherham, has the potential to drive up rents and price the poorest residents out of some parts of the borough.*

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

The substantive motion was then debated, put to the vote and was carried.

150. NOTICE OF MOTION - HOLDING THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE FOR MISLEADING VOTERS ON WELFARE REFORM

It was moved by Councillor Z. Collingham and seconded by Councillor A. Carter:

The Council notes:

- The resignation of the RMBC Deputy Leader, Cllr David Sheppard, from the Labour Party in protest over the Government’s welfare reform plans, which he describes as targeting the vulnerable in society.
- The Labour Party’s 2024 general election campaign included commitments to support vulnerable citizens and oppose austerity measures.
- The proposed welfare reforms are projected to cut £5 billion, primarily by restricting the eligibility for Personal Independence Payments (PIP), adversely affecting disabled individuals.

The Council believes:

- Public trust and confidence in the governing Party's principles and values is key in any democracy.
- The Labour Government's proposed welfare reforms represent a significant policy reversal from their election promises and a betrayal of voters' trust.
- The proposed reforms will disproportionately harm the most vulnerable members of society.

The Council resolves to:

1. Condemn the Labour Government's proposed welfare reforms and express disappointment at the breaking of election promises.
2. Call upon Labour Group Councillors to publicly oppose the proposed welfare reforms, and advocate for policies that honour election commitments made and support vulnerable residents.
3. Ask the Group Leaders to jointly write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions urging the Government to reconsider its approach to welfare reform and wider management of the economy, ensuring that policies align with election promises made and that they protect the well-being of the most vulnerable.

Following the moving and seconding of the Motion, Councillor Read moved, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 18(20)(i), that the motion being debated be put to a vote immediately. Councillor Cusworth seconded this proposal and, on being put to the vote, it was carried.

As such, the Motion which had been moved by Councillor Z. Collingham and seconded by Councillor A. Carter was immediately put to the vote and was lost.

151. NOTICE OF MOTION - SAVE OUR RIVERS: RESIDENTS SHOULDN'T PAY FOR WATER COMPANY POLLUTION

It was moved by Councillor Tarmey and seconded by Councillor A. Carter:

That this Council notes that:

- Every river in England is now polluted, with Environment Agency data showing that water companies spilled raw sewage for a record time of 3.61 million hours into the sea and rivers in England in 2024.

- This included, amongst others: 203 times for 2012 hours in Ravenfield, 137 times for 460 hours near Greasbrough, 108 times for 1897 hours in Letwell, 82 times for 630 hours in Dinnington and Anston, 96 times for 265 hours near Eastwood, 62 times for 614 hours near Woodsetts and 53 times for 100 hours near Thorpe Hesley.
- Yorkshire Water is one of four water companies who are collectively responsible for over 90% of all serious pollution incidents; council believes that such companies should withhold bonuses for senior executives until the sewage problem is fixed. Whilst Severn Trent Water performs much better, there are still an unacceptable number of incidents overall across the borough.
- Rotherham residents will be left to pay for the profiteering behaviour of our water companies and the mishandling of the sewage scandal by successive governments; with water bills expected to increase by an average of £123 this year in England.
- Government funding to the Environment Agency to monitor river quality and regulate farms and water companies has dropped 75% since 2010/11 and in 2020 just 3.6% of pollution complaints made to the Agency resulted in penalties.

Council welcomes the establishment of a new Independent Water Commission but believes that further action is required on the part of the water industry and central government to tackle the sewage crisis.

Therefore, this Council resolves to request the Chief Executive write to:

1. The Chief Executive(s) of Yorkshire Water and Severn Trent Water calling for urgent action to address the impact of waste-water discharges on our local rivers.
2. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asking for the budget of the Environment Agency to be increased.
3. The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee to advocate for greater enforcement of existing regulatory powers.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

152. NOTICE OF MOTION - IMPACT OF DISABILITY WELFARE CUTS

It was moved by Councillor Yasseen and seconded by Councillor Havard:

Summary/Background:

As elected representatives of Rotherham, we have a moral obligation to speak up when national policy threatens the dignity, stability and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents. Cutting welfare support for disabled and long-term sick people, not as a matter of necessity but to save money undermines the very principles of fairness, compassion and public service that we are elected to uphold.

That this Council:

1. Notes with serious concern that:

- a. The Government has announced changes to disability related welfare benefits, including reductions in eligibility for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and cuts or freezes to the health component of Universal Credit for those who are long-term sick. These changes will affect approximately 3.2 million households nationally, with an average loss of £1,720 per year;
- b. Rotherham is disproportionately impacted, with 24,200 residents receiving PIP (14.3% of the working-age population) and 13,900 residents receiving the health component of Universal Credit (8.7% of people aged 18–65) both figures well above the national average;
- c. The Department for Work and Pensions' own impact assessment forecasts that 370,000 current PIP claimants will lose an average of £4,500 per year by 2029/30, and 430,000 potential claimants will be denied access entirely;
- d. New applicants for the health component of Universal Credit will see support cut by almost 50%, and existing claimants will face a benefit freeze, with 2.5 million people projected to lose an average of £500 per year;
- e. On a pro-rata basis, this means in Rotherham alone, an estimated 2,420 disabled people would lose PIP worth £11 million, 2,810 people would be denied access to PIP, and 13,900 residents could lose £7 million in support via Universal Credit;
- f. The Government's own assessment also suggests that 250,000 people may be pushed into poverty. Proportionally, this equates to 1,640 more people in Rotherham, including **330 more children, falling below the poverty line.**

2. Notes with alarm that these cuts are driven primarily by a Government commitment to reduce welfare spending, rather than a comprehensive strategy to support disabled and long-term sick residents into meaningful employment;
3. Recognises the Council's ongoing work to support residents through investment in advice services, local welfare assistance and partnership working, while acknowledging that powers over national welfare policy rest with central Government.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Request that the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on behalf of the Council, expressing concern about the proposed welfare reforms and urging Government to immediately reconsider its proposals and instead:
 - Maintain current eligibility for PIP;
 - Uprate all elements of Universal Credit in line with inflation;
 - Focus on meaningful support to help disabled and long-term sick residents who can work, to access appropriate employment;
 - Collaborate with South Yorkshire local authorities and the Mayoral Combined Authority to implement the recommendations of the Pathways to Work Commission, including investment in skills, mental health support, and inclusive workplace practices.
2. Request that the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members write to Rotherham's three Members of Parliament, urging them to oppose the proposed welfare reform plans in Parliament and to advocate for the protection of disability and sickness-related benefits on behalf of Rotherham residents.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

153. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee be noted.

Mover: Councillor Marshall

Seconder: Councillor Baggaley

154. LICENSING BOARD AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Board and the Licensing Committee be noted.

Mover: Councillor Hughes

Seconded: Councillor Beresford

155. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee be noted.

Mover: Councillor Monk

Seconded: Councillor Clarke

156. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There was one question which had been submitted:

1. Councillor Currie:

Please could you tell me who is responsible for the repairs and replacement of the concrete hydrant marker posts that are a key element for fire safety in our communities?

Councillor Knight explained that the concrete post and plates belonged to Yorkshire Water. The South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority still maintained them but if they got damaged and could cause injury they were removed and made safe (by Yorkshire Water). SYFR would then replace the Fire Hydrant plate on the nearest lamppost indicating the Fire Hydrant location.

In his supplementary Councillor Currie asked who he could send pictures of damage to so that repairs could take place.

Councillor Knight advised Councillor Currie to send him the pictures and he would send them on to the Chief Fire Officer for actioning.

157. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 11 questions submitted:

1. Councillor Bacon: As a result of Labour's vicious welfare cuts, 370,000 disabled people will lose PIP disability payments. Analysis reported by Sky News shows the average loss is £4,500. What is the Council doing to condemn these cuts and take action to support the most vulnerable in our borough?

Councillor Bacon agreed to have a written response.

2. Councillor Bacon: As a result of Labour's vicious welfare cuts, their own Government impact assessment say overall they expect 250,000 people, including 50,000 children, to be pushed into relative poverty – this is additional people going into poverty. Is there anything the Council can do additionally to support those affected in Rotherham?

Councillor Bacon agreed to have a written response.

3. Councillor Jones: Over the last two years the road safety team has been delivering road safety projects in our wards funded by SYMCA can the member tell us how many of these suggestions have been delivered to the specifications of local Councillors and residents?

Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, stated that he understood that this was referring to the first tranche of the Local Neighbourhood and Road Safety schemes programme and, as of 8 April, six projects had been delivered and two were in progress.

In his supplementary, Councillor Jones stated that he believed there would have been more than that. Three schemes had been put forward in Councillor Jones' ward. One was on a 60mph road and a 40mph buffer zone had been put in. The second was speed bumps that had been put in Bradgate Lane and they had been installed outside the house of the only person that had objected. The third was proposed by the local policing team who had asked for a one way system to be put onto a blind bend. SYMCA had originally said that they could not fund it because it did not include a cycle lane. When members proposed to use their ward budgets to fund it, they were told that the lane was not wide enough for cycling. He asked the Cabinet Member to explain how the road could be wide enough for two cars but not wide enough for one car and a cycle lane.

Councillor Taylor agreed to provide a written response.

4. Councillor Hussain: It is clear that the people of Boston Castle Ward, along with residents in other affected areas, do not want selective licensing in their neighbourhoods. Why, then, is the council insisting on continuing with a policy that has already proven to be ineffective for another five years?

Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Housing, advised Councillor Hussain not to prejudge the results of the consultation. The Council were currently analysing the responses, and no decision had yet been made. Over 500 responses to the consultation had been received and these would be factored into any recommendations regarding future schemes.

It was disappointing that in many areas, not all, but in many, high levels of failures had been found in private rented properties, even in a second period of a five-year licensing scheme. This was not a failing of the scheme however, but of private sector landlords. Councillor Hussain had stated that people in his ward were against Selective Licensing, but perhaps he failed to tell them that as a result, hundreds of local families would be living in unsafe homes. Councillor Allen did not think that was acceptable, and that was why the Council were looking at the best way to continue to protect tenants in the future.

In his supplementary, Councillor Hussain asked why only certain areas were included in the proposed scheme?

Councillor Allen explained that Selective Licensing was, by definition, targeted and that targeting was based on criteria as set out in the Housing Act 2004. As such, areas that met the criteria became the subject of potential schemes.

5. Councillor Hussain: To date, we have not been provided with any information regarding how the council has spent the money collected from selective licensing fees over the past ten years. Could you please clarify what prompted the SL team to raise the fees by almost 100% without providing an audit of the expenditure in the last failed scheme?

Councillor Allen stated that there was no failed scheme. In terms of potential future schemes, the team had not raised the fees. Councillor Allen confirmed that any money generated from licence fees could only be spent on ensuring the conditions of the scheme were complied with. In the last year there was not enough funding generated from those fees to undertake those inspections, so they had to be subsidised from the Council's general resources. The proposed figure was part of the consultation and, should a licensing scheme be adopted, it would of course be considered before a forward final proposals were brought forward.

In his supplementary, Councillor Hussain stated that if it was not known exactly where the money received was being spent, the Council could not know where the fee received as part of the next scheme, £995 per property, would be spent.

Councillor Allen explained that the agreed final proposals would determine the level of work that needed to be done which in turn would determine the level of resource required, resulting in the agreed fee. This would be set out in the Cabinet report.

6. Councillor Yasseen: With the Labour Government pressing ahead with cruel reforms to PIP, will the Council urgently invest more into its benefits appeals team that has to date successfully overturned countless unfair benefit decisions? As more vulnerable residents are

pushed to the brink, we must strengthen local support to fight these savage and unnecessary Labour Government cuts.

The Leader explained that the appeals team was part of the Money and Benefit Advice offer the Council provided and had a very successful track record in supporting residents with their benefit appeals, achieving a success rate of 81% on all appeals. A view had not yet been taken regarding future capacity. The benefit rule changes referred to were not being implemented until November 2026 if they were to be implemented at all. In the meantime the team would review demand and capacity during this current financial year and identify any resource requirements in good time.

7. Councillor Yasseen: Question caps, debate limits and amendment bans, what's next, a mute button for the opposition? These are just some of the new constitutional changes being proposed. Is this really what democracy looks like in a Labour-run council?

The Leader reiterated what he had said in the earlier debate which was that the Council needed to have rules that allowed for all of the necessary business to be undertaken in a practical way. The Leader stated that the current meeting had been underway for 5 hours and 15 minute and a number of members had already had to leave. The Leader believed that the right balance had been struck in terms of the proposals that had been agreed earlier in the meeting.

8. Councillor Yasseen: Can the Cabinet Member confirm that any future proposals to develop a Selective Licensing scheme or my preference a wider Rotherham private sector housing plan, will undergo pre-decision scrutiny and that ward councillors will have an opportunity to influence the draft plan before any implementation decisions are made?

Councillor Allen explained that no Cabinet Member could choose which reports or decisions went forward for pre-scrutiny. Councillor Allen stated that member engagement with the proposals was very important to her, and she would be keen to engage and support any such scrutiny.

9. Councillor Yasseen: With American tariffs now threatening key UK export sectors, what work is being done by the Council and South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to assess and mitigate the impact on local manufacturers and small exporters in Rotherham who are affected?

Councillor Taylor stated that decisions on global trade policy taken by the US were clearly matters outside the Council's control and most economists agreed that tariffs were blunt instruments and could be damaging for the world's economy and, by extension, the borough.

The particular picture for companies in Rotherham was complex and would vary by individual circumstances. The Council would continue to stand by its businesses as the situation evolved. The approach included engagement; collaboration with trade and support bodies; assistance to exploring alternative markets; and access to financial and advisory support.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen asked if Councillor Taylor agreed with her that it was worrying that the Prime Minister did not seem to have a plan in response to the tariffs.

Councillor Taylor stated that it was correct to respond in a cool way and many other economies had responded in a similar manner.

10. Councillor Thorp: When is RMBC going to take action over the Broom Lane School crossing instead of waiting for a child to be knocked down, even Cllr read admitted more funding than the CRSTS cycle lane funding may be needed when people seem to be prepared to drive through crossing while people are crossing?

Councillor Taylor stated that the fastest way to deliver a solution was to use money already allocated, as part of the Broom Road cycleways project, to develop works as part of the Neighbourhood Streets part of that project. Councillor Taylor did not understand why Councillor Thorp kept advocating to pull the funding and set the process back. The budget of the CRSTS project was likely to be sufficient to cover mitigation – this would not necessarily be the case if the Council were dependent on finding other funding. Designers had been instructed to investigate improvements at this location, and the comments made by Councillor Thorp at last month's Cabinet meeting had been shared with them.

Councillor Taylor felt that Councillor Thorps interventions were hindering the process, not progressing it.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp stated that he did not believe something could be hindered when there was being no progress on it anyway. He also stated that this was not the only school crossing with problems. Councillor Thorp asked if the Council could talk to SYMCA to see if CRSTS funding could be used for schools all over the borough to make them more active travel, so they were safer for children to get to school.

Councillor Taylor stated that every time there was a new discussion or proposal, the process went back to square one. He reiterated that there was a proposal in place and the consultation process was ongoing. Councillor Taylor encouraged Councillor Thorp to engage through the process.

In regard to other crossings, Councillor Taylor explained that there was a programme in place for school crossings that worked on a points based system. If the Broom Road crossing was taken out of the CRSTS project, it would fall into this project but would not necessarily be top of the list.

11. Councillor Thorp: What time frame are we looking at to have East Bawtry Road and especially Worrygoose roundabout resurfaced. Last week a cyclist fell off his bike on the roundabout after hitting a pot hole luckily the car following stopped in time?

Councillor Taylor stated that it was interesting that Councillor Thorp used a cycling incident to highlight his concerns given his previous protestations regarding efforts to improve safety for cyclists on the highway. Councillor Thorp had been against dedicated cycleways that would keep cyclists safe and away from cars but would also fund resurfacing works in those areas.

In regard to East Bawtry Road and Worrygoose roundabout, the works were in the Highway Maintenance Programme and the programmed date for commencement was 28 April 2025. These works included the resurfacing of Worrygoose roundabout.

Councillor Thorp responded that it needed to be done as soon as possible.

158. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.