

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 3 September 2024**

Present:- Councillor McKiernan (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Ahmed, Baggaley, Beck, Beresford, C. Carter, Cowen, Havard, Jones, Mault, Rashid, Stables, Thorp and Williams.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tinsley, Mrs Bacon and Mrs Jacques.

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

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

16. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 9 JULY 2024

In the previous meeting held on 9 July 2024, it was agreed to seek further information regarding the new IT system for drainage. The Chair confirmed this information had been received but not in time to be included as part of the agenda. The information would be circulated to Members after the meeting via email.

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2024 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

The Chair advised that there were no members of the public or representatives of media organisations present at the meeting and there were no questions in respect of matters on the agenda.

19. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:-

That under Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for agenda item 19 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006. This is formal notice under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England)

Regulations 2012 of Key Decisions due to be taken by the Authority and of those parts of the Cabinet meeting identified in this Forward Plan will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information as defined in the Local Government Act 1972.

20. OVERVIEW OF THE PORTFOLIO OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT, JOBS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The Chair welcomed Councillor Robert Taylor, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs, and the Local Economy to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy provided an overview of his portfolio, explaining that that it contained the most diverse areas of responsibility, ranging from securing jobs, investment in the economy and strategic responsibility for the built environment. The Cabinet Member decided to focus his briefing on a few broad headlines within this portfolio, which was transport infrastructure, regulatory functions, economic development, and regeneration.

The Cabinet Member stated that economic development drives several of the Council's key priorities and is also central in contributing towards Rotherham's vision for growth. He noted an example of economic development, which was the success of the five business centres strategically placed across Rotherham that supported over 150 businesses and provided over 800 jobs. These business centres have enabled 80% of Rotherham businesses to be operating for three years or more as well as supporting 40 new businesses to start-up every year, which has been a significant achievement for the borough given the economic challenges over the last few years. Included as part of economic development was Launchpad, an innovative programme delivered through the business centres that has supported new businesses and enabled both business growth and new jobs created across the borough. The Council has also supported inward investment and business growth through the Rotherham Together Partnership, Business Growth Board, and the Employment Skills Board, which also involves the Cabinet Member's involvement through his portfolio.

Regeneration was another critical area for the Cabinet Member due to all the developments happening across the borough including building major town projects, and the new Forge Island development, which is the new leisure destination in Rotherham and forms part of the town centre masterplan. The new cinema would be the first cinema in the town centre for over thirty years, which is a substantial achievement and would open to the public on Friday 6th September, 2024. In addition, to these developments there had been significant investment within Rotherham's markets along with other investments across the borough, derived from several successful funding bids.

The Cabinet Member informed the commission that the next phase of

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transformation were the two sites in the town centre that were both integral to the future growth and development of the borough. Additionally, the Cabinet Member also highlighted the success of Rotherham's advanced manufacturing park (AMP), which has been recognised worldwide, as a pioneering centre that has some of the world's leading companies on the park including Rolls Royce, Boeing and McLaren Automotive.

The next area discussed by the Cabinet Member was transport infrastructure. He informed Members that this area underpinned all the work that has currently taken place within regeneration as well as in all future plans. Rotherham's mainline station was another notable example that was highlighted by Cabinet Member, which had provided greater opportunities for regeneration and connectivity for Rotherham by returning mainline train services to the borough. Another critical key area in transport infrastructure has been promoting safe and active travel. Work has taken place closely with members of the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership around developing safer roads across the region and the borough.

The Cabinet Member explained a programme of maintenance which included repairing potholes, surfacing, and resurfacing roads because of the £24 million funding from the Council up to 2024 which has been used to improve the roads and reduce the number of potholes across the borough. He also explained that the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority had fundamentally looked at changing where bus services were managed, which would be another project that would feed into the infrastructure vision for Rotherham. The Cabinet Member explained that within this area, his portfolio also covered car parking, appeals, car parking permits, the blue badge scheme as well as managing untaxed and abandoned vehicle removal.

The Cabinet Member then proceeded to highlight the area of regulatory functions which his portfolio covered. This included the Council's Planning Board that assesses and processes planning applications as well as the work undertaken by the Licensing Committee considering and processing licenses. He confirmed that as part of this was the Council's Local Plan, which is a significant piece of work within the Council's long-term development strategy that has major implications for the borough in terms of policies and proposals for new housing, shopping, employment, and travel. Members were informed that this plan has since gone to Cabinet and was currently being assessed and reviewed.

The final area of the portfolio was property assets, which included managing safely and sustainably all council buildings and lands. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the Council's property assets were a vast list, which required a lot of work to maintain and be kept up to date. Another important aspect within property assets was considering future needs and requirements for the borough in terms of net zero biodiversity and electric vehicle (EV) charging. He noted that this was critical for the

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Council moving forward and would be beneficial in terms of future financial savings.

Overall, the Cabinet Member acknowledged that the past three months had been a steep but enjoyable learning curve for him as he developed his knowledge around this diverse portfolio. He also wanted to note that he was proud and grateful for all the council officers who had worked tirelessly against insurmountable pressures. The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for attending and sharing all the magnificent work across his portfolio with the commission.

In relation to the new cinema on Forge Island, Councillor Carter wanted to know if there would be any rent reductions for the new company to ensure this new entertainment venture was successful given that more people were now viewing films at home. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that this was a concern, but he felt incredibly positive as the cinema had been developed to take into consideration the changing way people are viewing entertainment. He also stated that the cinema was managed by an experienced national company who were already aware of such changes and were still successfully operating. The Cabinet Member stated that the new cinema intends to provide a full cinematic experience with its vast auditoriums, and an enjoyable place for families and young people to socialise.

A further question from Councillor Carter, was around the availability of EV charging on the Forge Island car park. The Cabinet Member confirmed that there were EV charging points on Forge Island and they will also be included in all car parking plans for future developments. He noted that work would take place by the Council to improve the offer across all its car parks to include available and working EV charging points and that measures have taken place through recent technologies to mitigate any vandalism on existing EV charging points.

The Chair then followed this line of questioning and wanted to know if the Council's EV charging strategies were ambitious and if the Council could go even further with this agenda. The Cabinet Member noted that the Council had been ambitious, but it still needs to be balanced in terms of sensible decision making within current financial constraints. Councillor Jones then queried whether the Council should take a more cautious view on large scale investments on EV charging, given that some of the biggest manufacturers had now moved away from EV cars to Hybrid cars. The Cabinet Member confirmed that they were aware of these emerging technologies and the next generation of cars, which was why such factors had been considered when progressing this programme forward for the borough.

Another question on car parking was provided by Councillor Thorp, who asked whether consideration had been given around offering free or reduced car parking for people visiting the new cinema, as he believed that this could encourage more people to go to the cinema, which would

be another way of ensuring its success. The Cabinet Member confirmed that as well as free car parking at the weekend and free 'off road' car parking there would be free car parking for up to three and a half hours for people going to the cinema.

In relation to active travel and cycle lanes the Chair asked how much work had taken place with the South Yorkshire Mayor and Sheffield City Council to ensure the number of cycle lanes was proportionately adequate for the borough. The Cabinet Member told Members that he had not yet been involved in this work, but he would take this consideration forward in any future decisions on proposed cycle lanes. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment confirmed that regular liaison and partnership work had taken place at an officer level with the Combined Authority around transport and cycle lane schemes that were funded through city region and sustainable transport funding.

A final discussion took place around road resurfacing and utility companies, where the Chair asked whether utility companies were being fined for inadequate road repairs in line with current legislation, and if the Council held a list of which utility companies had been fined. The Cabinet Member was unaware of a list but confirmed that the Council had informed all utility companies of its road resurfacing schedule to help them plan in their work to avoid any unnecessary disruptions or fines. However, he acknowledged that they had not followed this schedule and there were times when the Council had not been informed of work undertaken by utility companies, but he assured the commission that with these cases the Council had taken necessary steps using this legislation.

Resolved: That the Improving Places Select Commission:

1. Noted the overview from the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs, and the Local Economy.

21. LONG TERM PLAN FOR TOWNS - UPDATE

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment and Simon Moss, Assistant Director for Planning, Regeneration and Transport presented the draft proposals on the Long Term Plan for Towns.

Members were informed that in October 2023, the previous Conservative Government had identified fifty-five towns across the UK who would benefit from Long Term Plans for Towns. This would be supported by £1.1 billion of funding to drive ambitious plans for the regeneration of these fifty-five local towns over the next decade. As part of this, each town which included Rotherham were asked to: -

- Develop a Long-Term Plan to invest in and regenerate their town, based on the priorities of local people, and put to local people for

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consultation.

- Receive £20 million in endowment-style funding and support over ten years to support the Town Plan, to be spent on issues that matter to local people, including regenerating high streets and securing public safety. This plan will be put to local people.
- Establish a Town Board to bring together community leaders, employers, local authorities, and the local MP to oversee and deliver the Long-Term Plan.
- Use a toolkit of powers, from tackling anti-social behaviour to auctioning empty high street shops, reforming licensing rules on shops and restaurants and supporting more housing in town centres.

In response, Rotherham Council developed a draft Long-Term Plan for Towns based on the requirements and proposed funding. Members of the commission was informed that extensive consultation had already taken place with a wide range of key stakeholders including partners and the public. However, since the general election the Council is now waiting for a position update from the new Labour Government before any further work could be undertaken.

The Chair then requested that under section 100 A 4 of the Local government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 A of such Act indicated as now amended by the Local government access to information various variation order 2006.

Resolved: That the Improving Places Select Commission:

1. Noted and agreed the presentation on the Long-Term Plan for Towns

22. IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - WORK PROGRAMME 2024 - 2025

The Chair noted that there would be some further items to be added to the work programme, which will be shared with commission members. In addition, he noted that there had been two items from the commission's September's agenda which had been delayed and would be moved to later meetings, this included the Repairs and Maintenance Policy and the Flooding Alleviation Update.

Overall members agreed with the items on commission's proposed workplan, but it was noted by Councillor Beck that there needed to be

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some more additional items which could be considered for a full review or have as a spotlight item added to the work programme.

The Chair asked the commission for any further suggestions, which could be added to the work programme and put forward as future investigations for the commission. Commission members were asked to reply through the chair over the next two weeks, with their suggestions for the work programme.

Resolved: That the Improving Places Select Commission note the outline work programme.

23. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Commission's consideration.