

COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday 16 July 2025

Present:- The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Rukhsana Ismail) (in the Chair); Councillors Rashid, Ahmed, Alam, Allen, Bacon, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Beresford, Blackham, Bower, Brent, Castledine-Dack, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Cowen, Currie, Cusworth, Elliott, Fisher, Garnett, Harper, Havard, Hussain, Jackson, Jones, Keenan, Lelliott, Marshall, Mault, McKiernan, Monk, Read, Reynolds, Ryalls, Sheppard, Stables, Steele, Sutton, Tarmey, Thorp, Tinsley, Williams and Yasseen.

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

29. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Harrison, newly elected Member for Keppel, to his first meeting following the recent By Election. John Edwards, the new Chief Executive of the Council, was also formally welcomed.

It was reported that Valerie May Hoyle, Secretary of Rotherham United Women's Football Club had been awarded the British Empire Medal in the King's Birthday Honours list. This was for services to Association Football and to the community in Rotherham. The Mayor offered her congratulations.

Congratulations were also offered to Sharon Kemp OBE, the former Chief Executive of the Council who had been awarded Chief Executive of the Year at the Municipal Journal Awards in June. Members joined the Mayor in a round of applause. The Council had also been successful in winning the Northern Housing Awards "Best Affordable Housing Development up to £5m" for the development at East Herringthorpe. Housing Officers accepted the award from the Mayor and were given a round of applause.

The Mayor announced that Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive, would be leaving the Council at the end of the month. Members wished her well.

It was with great sadness that the Mayor reported on the passing of Sheila Walker, former Mayor and Keppel Ward member who had served on the Council from 2004 to 2012. The Mayor had attended former Councillor Walker's funeral on 20 June and sent the Council's deepest condolences to her family. Members observed a minute's silence.

The Mayor had also attended the memorial service for Dame Julie Kenny, Freewoman of the Borough of Rotherham. It was noted that whilst this was a sad day it was also an occasion to celebrate Dame Julie's life, success and legacy. A full list of Mayoral Engagements was attached at Appendix A to the Mayor's letter.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adair, Baum-Dixon, A. Carter, C. Carter, Clarke, Duncan, Elliott, Hall, Hughes, Knight and Taylor.

31. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETINGS

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council meetings held on 16 May 2025 and 21 May 2025.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings of Council held on 16 May 2025 and 21 May 2025 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Cusworth

32. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which set out the two petitions that had been received since the last meeting.

The first petition asked for a pelican crossing or zebra crossing to be installed on Station Road, Wath Upon Dearne and it had received 39 valid signatures. The Lead Petitioner, Christine Jones, was unable to attend but Councillor Jackson read out a statement on her behalf. The petition would be responded to by the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment within 10 working days of the meeting.

The second petition asked for improvements to road safety on Birks Holt, Maltby and it had received 38 valid signatures. The Leader Petitioner, Tina Bailey, attended the meeting and Councillor Tinsley read out a statement on her behalf. The petition would be responded to by the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment within 10 working days of the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the Council receive the petitions listed at paragraph 2.1 of the report and the lead petitioners or their representatives be entitled to address the Council for a total period of five minutes per petition 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 30 July 2025.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to record.

34. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were five public questions:

1. Mr Andrew Bates: Parishes are inundated by public concerns regarding land use. The absence of a resource showing the cumulative effect is not helping. Borough Councillors must have the same problem. The Land Development Plan is out of date. Can Parish/Borough Councillors look forward to a consolidated not piecemeal approach to planning to enable some proportionality to be taken during this unprecedented demand?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy explained that Parish Councils, and local residents, could view the Council's adopted Local Plan online. The plan identified areas of land which could be built upon, and which areas were to be protected by allocating all areas of land across the borough for identified land uses. The Plan did not show the cumulative effect of development, but the interactive map on the Council's website showed areas where planning applications had been submitted.

The current Local Plan needed to be updated to reflect the new National Planning Policy Framework and the Government's new housing targets. This was likely to require more land than was currently allocated to meet the requirement. This would be considered carefully, proportionately and in consultation with the local community when looking at allocating land as part of the preparation of a new local plan and it would need to consider the cumulative impact of growth over the Plan period. The Council would commence work on the production of a new Plan in 2026 but no changes to sites had yet been agreed or would be agreed some time yet.

2. Ms Karen Kirby: Can the Council tell me why it has failed to share any information as to the extension of its Rotherham's Plans of Selective Licensing of Private Landlords consultation via its recently revised published leaflet?

The Cabinet Member for Housing explained that the revised leaflet which had been circulated to properties in the affected areas had been circulated precisely to inform people about the extension of the consultation. This had been done to respond to previous feedback where people felt that the locations had not been made clear enough. The consultation had been extended to ensure that anybody affected by the proposal had the opportunity to comment. The Council valued feedback and sought that feedback in multiple ways. There was an

online survey, paper-based surveys and meetings had been held. All responses would be transparently reported.

In her supplementary, Ms Kirby asked if the Council was aware that a specific reason should have been given for the extension?

The Cabinet Member explained that there was no specific reason other than taking on board feedback from residents, landlords and tenants on information that had not been made clear. It was not a new consultation, merely an extension of dates.

3. Ms Tracy Cartland-Ward: What is the reason for the Council making an exceptional decision to re-open the consultation for the proposed 2025-2030 Selective Licence, especially considering this was done before notifying the Ward Councillors?

The Cabinet Member for Housing explained that the consultation had been extended to address feedback relating to unclear information. Feedback was sought from all interested parties and stockholders. The comments that had been taken on board in the first round had been from people like Ms Cartland-Ward who had been to the chamber to raise issues including in relation to the locations, use of the wrong names for locations, and people not knowing that they had actually received a leaflet previously. Officers contacted the relevant ward members on the day the consultation was reopened. The Cabinet Member appreciated the fact that ward members would have liked more notice and this had been raised with the relevant officers.

In her supplementary, Ms Cartland-Ward asked, given this step was unusual and some suggested was possibly manipulative of the results of the original consultation period, what guidance, if any, had the Council applied from the government's guidance document, Selective Licensing in the Private Rented Sector, a guide for local authorities, last updated on 16 December 2024?

The Cabinet Member stated that she did not think it was unusual as the Council were simply listening to what people had said and responding. It was not new consultation. It was merely an extension of the date of the original consultation to give people an opportunity to share their voices with the Council. The Council had followed the government guidance and would be totally transparent when detailing the results of the feedback. The feedback would be broken down into the two different periods so everyone could see if there was any difference in the responses.

4. Mr Tony Mabbott: SYPA will be agreeing its three-year review of pensions strategy in March 2026, and will be consulting 'stakeholders' (including RMBC) before then. How will the Council ensure that staff, pensioners, unions and local people will be involved in the response to SYPA?

Mr Mabbott was not present to ask his question and as such a written response would be provided.

5. Ms Lisa Smith: Why is the council pushing a selective licensing scheme that will raise my rent and make it unaffordable for me. It will increase homelessness for many tenants who can't afford prices going up, while you claim it's in tenants best interests?

The Cabinet Member for Housing explained that the Council's goal in consulting on Selective Licensing was to bring forward ways to ensure residents across the Borough had safe and decent housing and raised the standard of private rented properties. Conditions in some areas were poor; in the previous scheme, issues were found in 83% of properties. 1 in 7 properties were found to have the most serious types of faults. Selective Licensing was the only legal tool the Council had to ensure proactive inspections of properties.

It was acknowledged that there were a range of views and that was why consultation had been and was taking place. No decision had been made yet and the consultation was seeking views, such as the one Ms Smith had offered, in order to inform the decision.

The Council had seen no evidence in previous schemes of rents increasing and nor was there any evidence to support increases in homelessness.

In her supplementary, Ms Smith asked if her rent goes up now, would the council be blamed, since her landlord had not raised it in a while? She also asked why the Council assumed and blamed tenants for problems like fly tipping on her street when it was the probation house causing problems?

The Cabinet Member stated that the Council would not be responsible for any rent increases. The landlord would be to blame because it was the landlord who was responsible for setting the rent. In regard to fly tipping, the people responsible should be the ones held to account. There were mechanisms for reporting fly tipping and the Cabinet Member urged Ms Smith to use those mechanisms so that it could be removed as soon as possible.

35. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

36. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader was invited to present his statement. He welcomed the new Chief Executive, John Edwards, to his first Council meeting and

congratulated Councillor Tony Harrison on his recent victory in the Keppel by-election.

The Leader noted that the Crematorium had achieved Green Flag status and Clifton Park had achieved Green Heritage status. Further, the next stage of funding for the mainline Gateway Station proposal had been secured which was a big step forward.

Reference was made to the significant staffing challenges recently faced by the Household Waste Service which had resulted in delays to collections, especially garden waste collections. The Leader sought to reassure Members that additional resources were being put in place and the team were working hard to address the backlog. The position had improved over the last few days, but further changes were required to get things back on an even keel.

The Leader wished to focus on Marcia Grant. The Inquest into Mrs Grant's death had closed earlier in July and had found grounds to believe that Rotherham Council had played a contributing role in her death. Mrs Grant had been a much-loved and highly respected foster carer, and a central figure within Rotherham's fostering community. She was caring and compassionate, providing a home and support to some of the borough's most vulnerable children. The Leader offered the Council's deepest and sincerest condolences to Mrs Grant's family, stating that he was truly sorry for their loss and for any failings on the Council's part.

Whilst the Leader was limited in what could be discussed due to potential legal action, he did want to assure everyone that changes had already been made following the incident two years prior. The Council was awaiting the Prevention of Future Death report and would take robust action in response to that report. The Fostering Service had already begun making improvements to strengthen processes before the inquest began, including in relation to record keeping and risk assessment recording. They continually strove to improve the way that the Council worked with and interacted with children, young people and foster carers.

The Council continued to invest heavily in creating new residential homes for Rotherham's children, because the national market for placements was both full and broken. The Leader had asked the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services to produce a comprehensive action plan which would be reported to the Improving Lives Select Commission for scrutiny.

The Leader stated that social work teams made incredibly difficult decisions every day that change the course of people's lives in profound ways. Every decision balanced risks and challenges. The Leader was enormously grateful for what they did with care and professionalism. When it went wrong, as it had in this case, there were nothing more serious.

The Leader of the Majority Opposition Group, Councillor Z Collingham, was invited to respond to the statement. He also welcomed the new Chief Executive to his role.

Councillor Collingham stated that the conclusion by the coroner that failures of the Council had contributed to the circumstances giving rise to the death of Mrs Grant had been one of the hardest things he had had to read as a Councillor. He acknowledged that the service were looking at the issues raised and appreciated that it was right to wait for the full report. Councillor Collingham was grateful for the reassurances provided by the Leader and Chief Executive. There had been an openness about the process going forwards as there would be a members briefing and the opportunity to understand the detail. However, Councillor Collingham was concerned that these possible failings in practice and procedure happened only two years ago which was after the Council had turned many corners in relation to Children and Young People's Services. He sought assurances that the Council was doing all it could to ensure that no other children were placed into foster care without the right steps being taken and that the Council would face up to the outcomes of the full report as a matter of principle.

Councillor Collingham also referenced Baroness Casey's National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSE). The Audit had stated categorically that Rotherham Council and South Yorkshire Police were in a different place to that off the early 2000's. However it did show how far the country had to go to identify, understand and combat group-based CSE. For example, the same crimes were not being recorded under the same definitions in different areas; the information being collected was not adequate; ethnicity and nationality were not always being recorded; statutory agencies were not being held to account and out of area taxi licensing was still being allowed. These issues put children across the whole country, including in Rotherham, at risk. Councillor Collingham asked the Leader if he now saw the value in a national inquiry and if the Council would take every opportunity to support the 12 recommendations? He also asked if Rotherham Council could provide a model of good practice on things like taxi licensing?

Councillor Collingham referenced the recent Keppel By-Election which had been caused by one of the Labour members resigning. He also referenced the number of Labour members that had become independent or had moved to the back benches. Councillor Collingham expressed concern that the Council was losing stability and continuity in decision-making at the top level which damaged everyone in the short term. He asked to be kept informed about any further changes.

The Leader was invited to respond to Councillor Z Collingham. He provided assurance that the Council were moving forward and had already acted on the issues raised. It was important that the action plan went to Scrutiny so that members could look at the detail, talk to professionals and get that in depth understanding.

In response to the comments regarding the Baroness Casey report, the Leader expressed his disappointment that assurance had not been found in the way CSE was dealt with nationally and therefore it was right that there be a national inquiry. It was right that police forces had been asked to re-examine cases where no further action had been taken. The Leader wanted the inquiry to be transformative and not just pick off four or five localities. He absolutely supported the recommendations and was pleased that Baroness Casey had referenced Rotherham's taxi licensing policies (albeit not by name) as an example of best practice. The Council would offer its support wherever possible.

The Leader stated that he appreciated Councillor Collingham's unexpected concern for the Rotherham Labour Group and would notify him of further changes when required.

Questions on the Leader's statement were invited from all other Members.

Councillor Reynolds referenced the missed bin collections, specifically the garden waste collections that residents paid extra for. He stated that residents were frustrated and felt let down.

The Leader stated that he understood residents frustrations and apologised. It was important to prioritise resources and therefore general household waste had to be collected first. He could not make any promises regarding the service, but he stated that the Council would look at what could be done for residents once the service returned to normal.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester paid tribute to former Councillor Sheila Walker and placed on record his thanks to all officers, elected Members and members of the Muslim Liaison Bereavement Group who had worked hard to secure Green Flag status for East Herringthorpe Cemetery. He asked the Leader if the fines issued to Dignity could be reinvested in the provision of toilets and communal facilities at the entrance to the crematorium?

The Leader explained that he thought that the toilets fell outside the remit of the contract with Dignity but the Council would look into what could be done in terms of investment to enable improvements.

Councillor Bacon asked for an update on the ambition for Ulley Park to be awarded Green Flag status as he felt it had been neglected over recent years. He also made reference to the bin collections and previous concerns he had raised about missed collections. Councillor Bacon asked if the press statement released by the Council saying that the bins had not been emptied because of the bank holiday was true?

The Leader confirmed that work was still ongoing regarding Ulley Country Park Green Flag status. It was also confirmed that public litter bins had previously been impacted by the bank holiday due to reduced capacity

and more waste.

Councillor Bower referenced the Gateway Station development and what impact the shelving of the electrification of the Midland Main Line scheme would have on the business case for the station development? He described the shelving of the scheme as a major blow to the local economy and found it hard to believe that there would be no impact on the new station.

The Leader explained that the Council would continue to back the Midland Mainline electrification scheme, and the decisions made by the previous and current Government to shelve the scheme were wrong. He was happy to make representations to Government on that matter. However the Leader did not think that the electrification scheme was part of the business case, but he would get back to Councillor Bower in writing.

Councillor Yasseen referenced the Marcia Grant Inquiry and sought assurance that scrutiny would be involved in reviewing the outcomes of the full report. She also echoed Councillor Bennett-Sylvester's comments regarding the work of the Muslim Liaison Bereavement Group at East Herringthorpe Cemetery. Councillor Yasseen asked for recognition for Mr Sarad Yousaf who had noticed a significant fire during the night at a large building in Moorgate. He had managed to enter the building and wake the residents to ensure they all escaped. Councillor Yasseen stated that many lives had been saved because of this and she asked the Council to recognise this heroism.

The Leader explained that information regarding the Marcia Grant Inquiry would be shared with members when and where possible. He also thanked the Muslim Liaison Bereavement Group for their work on East Herringthorpe Cemetery, particularly Mr Azam. In concluding, the Leader stated that the Council owed Mr Yousaf a debt of gratitude for his heroic actions that saved many people's lives.

37.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH APPOINTMENT

Consideration was given to the report which recommended that Council agree with the recommendation of the Senior Officer Appointments Panel in regard to the Director of Public Health appointment.

On 23 January 2025, Staffing Committee approved the recruitment process for the Director of Public Health. An appropriate recruitment process was undertaken which resulted in Emily Parry-Harris being the preferred candidate to take the role as the Director of Public Health. This appointment had been approved by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. It was confirmed that all guidance had been followed throughout the recruitment process.

Resolved:

That Council appoint Emily Parry-Harries to the post of Director of Public Health.

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers
Bacon

Seconder: Councillor

38. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD UPDATE

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the report provided an update to Council of the activities and outcomes of Overview and Scrutiny activity at the Council. It summarised the work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) and the Select Commissions - Health (HSC), Improving Lives (ILSC) and Improving Places (IPSC).

Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, moved the report and placed on record his thanks to the Assistant Chief Executive who had also been the Scrutiny Link Officer for OSMB. He also placed on record his thanks to the former Chair and Vice-Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission and the former Chair of the Audit Committee. Councillor Steele provided an update on the informal grass cutting and grounds maintenance review and thanked Councillor Tinsley for his work on water safety.

Councillor Bacon, Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, seconded the report and stated that OSMB was working on some important pieces of work such as the bins, the consultation process and holding the Leader to account.

Councillor Currie placed on record his thanks to Chris Jones, a Council Street Scene Officer who was extremely responsive and assistive to members. Councillor Currie asked for an update on the discussions that had taken place regarding weed killing. Councillor Steele agreed to provide a written response. Councillor Currie also stated that he would take a seat on a Scrutiny commission if it was vacant at the next Council meeting.

Resolved:

That Council receive the report and note the updates.

Mover:- Councillor Steele

Seconder:- Councillor Bacon

39. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FROM ANSTON AND WOODSETTS

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

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

In moving the report, Councillor Blackham highlighted the work being done on cross border rural crime initiatives. Joint working with Dinnington ward members and South Yorkshire Police had resulted in increased patrols; improved reporting channels and future engagements events. Work had also been done with Thorpe Salvin Parish Council to install a new CCTV system throughout the village. Councillor Blackham thanked the officers from the Neighbourhoods team for the Anston and Woodsetts Ward, Nicky Whitehead and Andrea Peers.

In seconding the report, Councillor Tarmey echoed Councillor Blackhams comments regarding the Neighbourhoods team. He also spoke about the CCTV in Thorpe Salvin which had been well received. Councillor Tarmey also noted the good working relationships between the Borough Councillors and the Parish Councillors. Work had been done to plant trees and work was ongoing on new crossings.

Resolved:

The update report was noted.

40. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FROM ASTON AND TODWICK

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19 November 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Aston and Todwick as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy. An update report had been provided as part of the agenda and each Ward Member was invited to speak.

In moving the report, Councillor Allen thanked her ward colleague, Councillor Bacon, stating that they worked well together. She highlighted the ward priorities as set out in the report and explained that monthly review meetings were held to look at the actions being taken to achieve those priorities. Councillor Allen stated that more needed to be done to support local businesses however an application had been submitted for a banking hub in Todwick and the Towns and Villages Fund had helped upgrade the shopping area in Todwick. Partnership working had been important along with cross-ward working.

In seconding the report, Councillor Bacon thanked Councillor Allen for her kind words and concurred that they did work well together. He focused on the work that had been done to mitigate car meetings, racing and anti-social behaviour on the A57. Councillor Bacon referenced the repainting of the post-box in Aston and the banking hub.

Resolved:

The update report was noted.

41. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 19 May 2025 and 9 June 2025.

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 19 May 2025 and 9 June 2025 be received.

42. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

43. 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.

44. PLANNING BOARD

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

45. STAFFING COMMITTEE

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

46. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

47. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were three questions:

1. Councillor Currie: Please could you tell me who I report broken or damaged hydrant location posts to in respect to public fire safety? I have been emailing them to Councillor Knight however there does not seem to be any repairs or new location signs on lampposts.

Councillor Taylor, the Rotherham spokesperson on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority was not present at the meeting and as such a written response would be provided.

2. Councillor Currie: Please could you ask the Mayor to look at the self-regulation placed on wholesalers to only sell boxes of N₂O (Nitrous Oxide) bottles to legitimate users and ensure the wholesalers stop selling boxes of N₂O to anyone as they are doing now?

Councillor Harper, the Rotherham spokesperson on South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel confirmed that he would pass on Councillor Currie's request to the Deputy Mayor for Policing via email and would copy Councillor Currie in to that email.

3. Councillor Yasseen: Do you agree that it is a fundamental responsibility of this Council to ensure our pension investments are not, directly or indirectly, complicit in the harm or genocide of innocent civilians, especially children?

Councillor Sutton explained that, whilst she understood the concerns about the use of pension investments, the ability of the Council/Pensions Authority to influence that was severely limited by law. In 2020, the Supreme Court in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign case made clear that funds invested in the Pension Fund whether by employers or scheme members should not be considered public money, but rather funds effectively held in trust to pay pensions. Additionally, the Supreme Court held in its judgement on the Palestine Solidarity Campaign case that it was not appropriate for political preferences, whether local or national, to take precedence over what was required under this fiduciary duty.

The power of SYPA to invest Pension Fund assets was therefore one which had to be exercised for investment purposes and not for other purposes. Although within clear limitations it was possible to consider non-financial factors (generally described as Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues) when making investment decisions. It was also important to recognise that SYPA did not directly own the shares and bonds of individual companies (or government entities). Rather, it invested through pooled funds managed by fund managers. In most cases the fund manager was the Border to Coast Pensions Partnership, one of 8 local government investment pools. Any companies invested in who supplied arms would be doing so under the explicit terms of licences from the relevant government and it

would be unreasonable (in terms of the legal principle known as Wednesbury reasonableness) to disinvest from a company acting with specific legal sanction. There was therefore little room to manoeuvre.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Yasseen stated that she disagreed with the response. All Pensions Funds across the Country have the ESG, Environmental, Social and Governance policies and this showed that pensions funds could care about ethics. Councillor Yasseen stated that the pension fund had invested £2million in Israeli companies and bonds and over £117million in arms firms. She asked if this was morally justified. As Councillor Yasseen had exceeded the one minute limit for asking a supplementary question, Councillor Sutton asked her to send her the question outside of the meeting and she would provide a response.

48. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 21 questions:

1. Councillor Bacon: Does the Leader of the Council agree that only a national statutory inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation can get to the bottom of the worst atrocity in modern British history?

The Leader stated that it was now inevitable that the inquiry would take place. However he stated that it remained unclear about whether the Inquiry was proposing to look at gaining a retrospective understanding or what questions it was seeking to address. The Leader believed that it needed to be done in a way that kept children safe presently. It also needed to be done in a timely way, unlike the previous review which took seven years to complete with the findings still awaiting implementation.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bacon asked, given what was now known and the local context, did the Leader think that Rotherham should have been an authority leading the call for a national inquiry?

The Leader explained that he did not think Rotherham should be leading the call. The Council needed to focus on its own obligations and the priority had to be to make sure that Rotherham services were as strong and effective as they could be. The Council would continue doing all it could to achieve justice for survivors who had been so badly let down. The Council would play its part in whatever national requirements there were.

2. Councillor Bacon: What progress has been made on overflowing bins across the borough?

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, Councillor Lynda Marshall, explained that information had been provided to

Councillor Bacon at the last Council meeting which confirmed that, thanks to investment in the bin stock, improvements in IT systems and investment in staff in the grounds and streets service, reports of issues with street litter bins had fallen by 73% since 2020.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bacon stated that the data might look good but on the streets it was a different story. He asked if the Cabinet Member would like to walk around the areas most affected and asked whether the Council would look at refunding taxpayers for the failure?

The Cabinet Member confirmed that she would be going out into the borough to see any issues first hand. She had not taken part in any discussions regarding a refund.

3. Councillor Thorp: The new Walking Wheeling Bus and Cycle Scheme from the Brecks to Broom Road Could you confirm this only will go ahead if the cycle lane is built because that's the reason SYMCA have allocated it, and none of the other benefits will go ahead if the cycle lane is not built?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, Councillor Williams, explained that any decisions on funding would ultimately be for the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and Department for Transport. In response to the question, it was explained that delivering only the neighbourhood streets elements of the project would not meet the Government's key requirement. That requirement, which was set out by the previous government, was to deliver a strategic route to enable people to walk and cycle more, and to improve the speed and reliability of buses to access jobs and opportunities. It was most likely therefore that the scheme would only get the benefit of this funding if it included a cycle lane.

4. Councillor Bacon: Given the local Conservatives in Rotherham called for free parking to help local people shop local in the town centre years ago, why has it taken Labour so long to finally listen?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, Councillor Williams, explained that he had not heard any Conservative members calling for the new parking offer that had been proposed as part of the Labour Council Budget. It was not included in the Conservative Budget amendment proposal in March 2025, but Councillor Williams was glad to have the support. In response to the question of why the Council had not proposed the offer sooner, Councillor Williams stated that 14 years of Tory austerity and the millions of pounds that were cut from the Council's budget had prevented that. Councillor Williams was pleased that in the first 12 months of the Labour government, the Council now had more funding that enabled it to take positive decisions such as the new car parking offer.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bacon asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that the Labour group needed to take ownership of its own policies which had led to wasteful spending which could have helped the Town Centre? He stated that the Council had sucked money out of the Town Centre through taxes on parking when it should have been helping local business.

The Cabinet Member explained that this was not a new initiative. Free weekend parking had been available for a number of years so this was not out of the blue; it was building on what was already being implemented. Councillor Williams stated that it was amusing that Councillor Z Collingham had asked about stability in the Labour group when some members of the Conservative group supported this offer whereas others opposed it.

5. Councillor Ball: What specific recommendations from the June 2025 grass cutting review are being implemented to improve green spaces, and how will you ensure equitable benefits across all wards, given concerns about town centre bias?

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, Councillor Marshall, explained that there were no formal recommendations from the OSMB session, but officers did speak with members of OSMB about a range of efforts to continue to improve the service. In particular this year, the grass cutting service had implemented several measures to ensure schedules were completed as efficiently and effectively as possible. These included the purchasing of new vehicles and equipment following additional investment. Also, the Council had undertaken refreshed training and improved deployment, underpinned by new IT systems that were also prioritised.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball asked what mechanisms were in place to address resident feedback if disparities in green space maintenance persist across Rotherham, as mentioned in page 25 of the agenda pack?

The Cabinet Member explained that the new IT system was making it more equitable across the borough.

6. Councillor Ball: What are the key actions and investments planned for green spaces in 2025-2026 under the Council Plan's "thriving, safe, and clean" goal, and how will success be measured?

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, Councillor Marshall, explained that a lot had been done over the past 12 months and more was planned for 2025-26. This included new cafes, event venues and better parking. £8million of Levelling Up Funding had been secured for café and playground updates. Thrybergh Country Park redevelopment works had been completed and an additional £8million of funding had been secured. At least 500 trees had been planted

across the borough. The Our Places Fund project in Maltby was in development and would include opportunities for increasing greenery on the High Street. Further, Green Flag Accreditation had been sought for four sites and there was a £1.8million capital budget for new play facilities, replacements of at least six urban play areas and improvements to the Water Splash Facility at Clifton Park. Investments had been made for drainage improvements at Waleswood Caravan and Campsite and a £33,000 investment had been made to improve ground conditions for large-scale events in Clifton Park.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball asked what would happen if it went over budget as there were a lot of projects that were going over budget at the moment. What contingency plans were in place in case that that happened again?

The Cabinet Member confirmed that a written response would be provided.

7. Councillor Reynolds: What is the cost of the work to be carried out on the old Primark site?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, Councillor Williams, explained that the acquisition and demolition of the old Primark building cost £1.3m. The estimated cost for the pocket park was £450,000.

8. Councillor Ball: What legal powers will the Street Safe Team use to tackle anti-social behaviour, and what contingency plans exist if it fails to meet objectives by April 2026?

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, Councillor Alam, explained that the Street Safe Team would use legal powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to tackle anti-social behaviour. This included Community Protection Notices, Public Spaces Protection Orders, Fixed Penalty Notices, and Closure Notices. They would also address statutory nuisances like noise and littering. Officers would be trained in enforcement, safeguarding, trauma-informed practice, and cultural competency. The initiative was a long-term investment in community safety, with a formal review scheduled for March 2026. If early objectives were not met, contingency plans included performance reviews, operational adjustments, and enhanced partnership working.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball asked that, given the licensing subcommittees concerns about alcohol related antisocial behaviour, how would the Street Safe Team's powers specifically address such issues around licensed premises and what coordination with licensing enforcement was to prevent overlap or gaps in tackling antisocial behaviour?

The Cabinet Member explained that the licensing enforcement officers were in a different team to the Street Safe Team but they would be working together to stop anti-sociable behaviour, making use of any powers available.

9. Councillor Ball: Provide an update on the recruitment and roles of new street cleansing officers as of July 2025, and how will you address OSMB concerns about missed bin collections?

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, Councillor Lynda Marshall, explained that Street Scene had recruited four frontline staff, three Bands C and one Band D who were now in training. The recruitment for the two Senior Band J officers would begin soon. These roles took longer due to the need for new job descriptions. The Cabinet Member explained that overflowing bins had been reduced by 75% over five years due to extra investment. The recent complaints were preceded by a hot bank holiday weekend and were not widespread.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball asked how the Council were addressing the financial pressures noted in the agenda of an overspend of 12 .8 million, to ensure sustained funding for the street cleansing initiative? And what specific steps had been taken to reduce missed bin collections in wards with the highest missed bin ratios? The Cabinet Member confirmed that a written response would be provided.

10. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What estimates do we have of the amount of hours spent caring or volunteering of working age residents classed as "economically inactive"?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, Councillor Williams, explained that there were no estimates of that nature. However, the Carers Trust estimated that approximately 25% of carers were unable to work as a result. This would equate to approximately 6,600 carers in Rotherham. Specific information on volunteering hours by "economically inactive" people was not available. However, the State of the Sector report 2024, carried out by Sheffield Hallam University, stated that there were 6,017 volunteers in Rotherham with an estimated contribution of £17 million to the economy per annum. Equally, the Council knew that there were many people with caring responsibilities who would like to work. A survey by the Centre for Social Justice found that 3 in 5 unpaid carers said that their care duties currently prevented them from taking up paid work or as much paid work as they would like to.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained that some volunteers felt like a burden by being classed as "economically inactive." He asked if by encouraging volunteering, were the Council

inadvertently adding to the economically inactive figures, despite volunteers saving millions of pounds by litter picking, providing children care, adult care or cleaning. He asked if the Cabinet Member would champion all the way volunteers add to the local economy?

The Cabinet Member was more than happy to champion the work of volunteers and the incredible contribution they made to the Borough.

11. Councillor Ball: How will the proposed Adult Care Charging Policy avoid harming vulnerable residents amidst economic hardship, and what mitigation measures are planned based on consultation feedback?

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health explained that the consultation on the charging policy for Adult Social Care would close on 28 September 2025. Once the consultation closed, Adult Social Care would review the feedback which would inform the final recommendations back to Cabinet in December 2025. This review would include consideration of any suggestions made during the consultation period by residents, partners and other stakeholders.

Everyone accessing adult social care support was subject to a means test (ability to pay) and The Care Act set out that no one should pay more than they could afford and ensured that they were left with a minimum income guarantee. In Rotherham, there were currently 2,759 people who received non-residential services and had been financially assessed. Of these, 42% did not pay anything at all, 50% made a partial payment, and just 197 people paid the full cost.

The Council would consider the consultation findings carefully, but the intention was that changes would only affect those who could afford to pay more, with the appropriate safeguards in place.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball asked, considering the Health Select Commission's focus on the Unpaid Carers Strategy, how would the Adult Care Charging Policy ensure that unpaid carers, particularly those in low -income households, were not disproportionately burdened? And what specific support would be offered to them based on the consultation outcomes?

The Cabinet Member explained that a response would be provided when the consultation had finished.

12. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: We have seen again in the local press this week the threat by landlords to pass on the cost of selective licenses. What savings can we evidence for tenants having their homes properly maintained?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, thanked Councillor Bennett-Sylvester for raising this question as it provided an

opportunity to highlight that selective licensing was not merely a regulatory tool; it was a mechanism for ensuring that rental properties met essential standards of safety, maintenance, and habitability. When homes were properly maintained under this framework, tenants experienced several measurable benefits such as lower living costs, healthier homes, more stability, and stronger communities.

A 2019 independent review by MHCLG backed this up as one area saw a 16% rise in house prices after licensing, linked to better property conditions and landlord management. No strong link to rent increases was found as licence fees were too small to drive these. Licensing also led to higher tenant satisfaction, fewer empty homes, and improved neighbourhood appeal. The Council acknowledged concern, but the priority was safe, decent housing for all. The final decision on future licensing areas would be made by Cabinet on 15 September 2025.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if one potential benefit was saving people the cost of a funeral.

The Cabinet Member explained that improvements in health situations could indirectly reduce the need for a funeral.

13. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can the Cabinet Member please give members a statement on the failure to collect brown bins across much of the borough and steps they are taking to rectify the situation please?

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, Councillor Lynda Marshall, stated that residents had been very patient over the last few weeks and this was appreciated. The Waste Collection service had faced increasing challenges, driven by higher than normal levels of sickness combined with limited agency staff availability. This had meant that the team had had to make a number of operational decisions and changes to rounds in order to ensure the most offensive waste was collected first. Staffing resources had improved as of the beginning of the week, and the Cabinet Member was pleased to confirm that all brown bins were collected as per the schedule on both Monday and Tuesday of this week. She would be closely monitoring the situation in the days and weeks ahead.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester raised the issue of refunds for residents. He also asked for improved communication for ward members as he had had to chase the Council for information rather than information being provided to him as a ward member.

The Cabinet Member explained that she would raise the matter with officers.

14. Councillor Z Collingham: With recent escalating delays in bin collections across the Borough, what steps are being taken to address the root causes of these within the service, for example sickness absence?

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, Councillor Lynda Marshall, explained that to manage sickness absence, the team operated under the usual policies and procedures of the Council which sought to support people back in to work wherever possible and address any repeated or long term absences for both the benefit of the individual and the Council. In light of the increase in cases, additional HR support was being provided to the team to manage this alongside reviewing any new requests for annual leave during this period.

In his supplementary Councillor Z Collingham asked if information was being provided to the Cabinet Member on whether there were any trends in the high levels of sickness and whether anything could be done operationally? He also asked what mechanisms were in place to respond to a situation like this if it happened again, such as agency staff or redeployed staff?

The Cabinet Member explained that agency support had been sought but there had been a lack of available staff. She was being kept up to date on the changing situation.

15. Councillor Z Collingham: How have we reached a position where we are spending nearly half a million pounds on the Mecca Bingo building, Corporation Street, simply to stand still and what is the plan to urgently bring this building into use as part of Rotherham's redevelopment?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy explained that the Council had not spent nearly half a million pounds to simply stand still. The money was being spent to make the building safe and secure and to protect the listed aspect of it.

Works included:

- Making the building safe for ongoing building management
- Securing the property against vandalism
- Ensuring weather-tight protection to windows and roofing areas
- Repair of hazardous parapet walls
- External painting of the main building to preserve and protect its historic architectural features

The Council had undertaken feasibility work to determine the future for the Mecca site as well as a survey into the condition of the building. The development of a Business Plan was also currently underway to examine its potential future use as a leisure and culture venue.

In his supplementary Councillor Z Collingham questioned how the Council had ended up in this position given it had owned the building

for around three years and he hoped that feasibility studies were well underway. He stated that the building was in a fantastic location and was ideal for what was being done as part of the Town Centre regeneration. Councillor Collingham therefore asked if the Cabinet Member could commit to driving the project forward?

The Cabinet Member explained that the Mecca Bingo building was part of the Council's Town Centre Regeneration Strategy. Works were due to start on site in August and a business plan was being developed. Councillor Williams stated that he was keen to drive the big projects forward and make sure they were delivered.

16. Councillor Yasseen: Has any legal risk or procedural flaw been identified in the original Selective Licensing consultation, which closed three months and two weeks ago and is this why the consultation has now been reopened without prior notice to councillors or stakeholders?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that no legal risk or procedural flaw had been identified. As explained earlier in the meeting, the Council were undertaking further consultation precisely in response to the kinds of issues that Councillor Yasseen and others had raised. The issue of ward members not being notified prior to the extension had been raised with officers.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that she had never known a statutory consultation be reopened months after it had closed. She asked for information on what issues had been raised and corrected between the previous consultation and the new consultation?

The Cabinet Member explained that there had been issues around boundaries being unclear and there were issues around people not being sure whether the consultation referred to Clifton or Eastwood. There were also the concerns around a mandatory question which was now optional.

17. Councillor Yasseen: Is the decision to reopen the Selective Licensing consultation a response to the volume of objections received, and is it intended to shift or influence the overall outcome of an already criticised and biased consultation process?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, answered no.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen asked if the Communities team within the Policy, Performance and Intelligence service had been consulted on in either the first or second consultation?

The Cabinet Member confirmed a written response would be provided.

18. Councillor Z Collingham: Now the Council has finally secured

agreement to purchase all outstanding properties for the Dinnington Levelling Up scheme, 2.5 years after opening negotiations, what are the remaining steps and estimated timeframe for work to commence?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy firstly thanked all the officers that had been involved in the processes behind the scenes. The final stages of design were underway and were due to complete in early October. The procurement of a contractor would then follow by the end of the year. A start on site would be confirmed once a contractor had been appointed, but this was expected to be in early 2026 and officers were looking into the potential for demolition and site clearance before this date.

19. Councillor Yasseen: Has the revised Selective Licensing consultation addressed previously submitted concerns about survey bias, compulsory questions and the misrepresentation of areas like Clifton, including confusion over which streets fall into which wards?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that she did not recognise any concerns about survey bias. She had already confirmed that the compulsory question referred to was no longer compulsory, and the misrepresentation of Clifton had been updated. The Council had always provided an interactive map on the consultation website, allowing residents to check whether their property was included in the proposed licensing zones. The service had acted on the feedback received regarding the clarification of area boundaries and, as a result, the leaflet to inform people of the extension of the consultation had been revised.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that, in the printed information, which was not interactive, one example of something that was missing from the last consultation was the whole of the Boston Castle Ward from the map. It was titled Eastwood. Councillor Yasseen asked if that had been corrected?

The Cabinet Member explained that a written response would be provided.

20. Councillor Yasseen: Was the decision to reopen the Selective Licensing consultation made by Cabinet, a delegated officer or both and can the Council provide an explanation of how that decision was reached?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that the original decision to undertake a consultation on the proposed Selective Licensing scheme was made by Cabinet in September 2024. That decision authorised officers to carry out a public consultation to gather views on the proposed licensing areas and conditions. The current consultation period, which was extended on 30 June 2025 to 20 July 2025, was not a new or additional consultation, but rather an

extension of the original consultation period, made in line with that delegation.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that residents were very confused as leaflets had been delivered about the new consultation and had contacted ward members who had not been advised that the new/extended consultation was taking place. She asked if the Cabinet Member was aware of that?

The Cabinet Member explained that all addresses had received a leaflet, but it did take time to get around to all of the impacted addresses. As previously stated, the issue of members not being notified in advance had been raised with officers.

21. Councillor Yasseen: What is the Council's process for informing and supporting ward councillors and residents when an evacuation is taking place in their ward, and how are responsibilities coordinated between departments during such incidents?

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, Councillor Alam, explained that the Council's Major Incident Plan outlined the command-and-control arrangements that would be put in place in readiness for, and in the event of an incident occurring.

The Council had a Borough Emergency Coordinator, who was a Strategic Director or Assistant Director, who would manage, oversee and lead any response, on call 24/7, as well as a Forward Liaison Officer who often would attend the scene of any incident. There was also a member of the Emergency Planning Service on call, who was responsible for mobilising the initial response from the Council under the direction of the Borough Emergency Coordinator.

It was the role of the Borough Emergency Coordinator to determine when it was appropriate to alert ward members. They were also responsible for ensuring that the responses of any council departments were coordinated.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that there had been three major incidents in the Boston Castle ward within the last few weeks. There had been two fires and a major gas leak. The gas leak could have led to a serious fire and 20 families were told they were going to be evacuated. Councillor Yasseen had contacted the Council for information but did not receive a response until the next day when she was told to contact the utility service. Councillor Yasseen felt this was a failure by the Council and not an appropriate response. She asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed?

The Cabinet Member explained that Councillor Yasseen had already received an apology from the Assistant Director for Community Safety and Street Scene for an error made by the coordinator. The Council

always wanted to make sure ward members were involved and engaged.

49. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.

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