COUNCIL MEETING
5th November, 2025

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

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

72. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor congratulated Rotherham Hospice on winning the Charity of the Year 2025 award and the Change Project of the Year 2025, for their Living Life's Wishes Strategy, at the Charity Times Awards. It was also noted that the historic Walker Cannon had been restored and returned to the front of the Town Hall to coincide with the 220th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

The full list of Mayoral Engagements was set out in Appendix A of the Mayor's Letter.

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Knight, Hall, Havard, Marshall and Pitchley.

74. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 10th September 2025.

Councillor Currie asked why the written responses from the September meeting had not been included with the minutes of the September meeting. It was confirmed that this was an oversight and they would be included in the January 2026 Council agenda.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10th September, 2025, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Read Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

75. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which set out the petition that had been received since the last meeting. The petition asked the Council to allocate funds to install security measures along the length of Brook Hill, Thorp Hesley in order to prevent unauthorised vehicle access, including traveller encampments. It had 62 valid signatures. Mr. Wilson, the Lead Petitioner, did not attend the meeting. 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 relevant Strategic Director be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday, 19th November 2025.

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

77. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were 4 public questions:

1. Prior to asking her question, T explained that she had been unable to attend Council meetings in person for a long time due to chronic back pain caused by repeated rapes from grooming gangs when she was 12. She explained that her questions related to what the Leader had said to Look North in June 2025 regarding the National Enquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA.) T felt that, despite asking questions since 2017, she had not received any answers. She had had meetings with the Leader about her concerns and needs in 2018.

   T asked: In what ways does Chris Read, the Leader of the Council, believe that Rotherham Council should be used as a model for other towns and cities for how to deal with the rape of children (politely referred to by Baroness Casey as CSEA - Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse)?

   The Leader explained that, in the interview, he had said that it was important that the events in Rotherham, including the suffering of people like T, were not lost in the National Enquiry. When Louise Casey published her report, what she described was a process very much like the one that Rotherham had been through over the course of the last 14 years. That was about a place based review of what happened, which in Rotherham’s case was the Jay report. Subsequent

to that was a police criminal investigation into specific allegation of crimes and that was Operation Stovewood. The Leader thought it important that the Government heard the Rotherham experience to ensure that other places learnt from the things that it got right and learn from the things it got wrong.

In her review, Louise Casey singled out the kind of taxi licensing reform that was put in place in Rotherham. The Leader wanted that to be adopted across the rest of the Country. Other changes had been made but that was not to say that the Council thought it had done everything right at all. The Leader explained that if the Government, in their review, did not consider the learning of the things that Rotherham had been through, there was potential that those mistakes could be made elsewhere.

In her supplementary question, T quoted what first tier tribunal judge Ord wrote in the decision that was sent out in 24th June which said: “when the witness T gave oral evidence we questioned T on the value to her of the information. Her reply was that she wanted to get the truth, that truth was important to her.” T stated that RMBC did not answer her questions, and she had many questions. She asked what the Council was doing to protect Muslim communities, what was the Council doing to protect other victims, survivors and members of the Muslim community from South Yorkshire Police. T explained that she had met with members of the Muslim community and told them that in no way did she hold them responsible for what had happened to her. Those vile criminals could not be called Muslim and the Muslim communities had suffered so much because of those vile criminals and were also victims.

T's supplementary question was: Why are you failing to answer questions on behalf of victims and survivors of child rape in Rotherham?

The Leader explained that the tribunal process referred to was about an Access to Information/Freedom of Information dispute that a member of the public had taken up against the Council and it was a long running ongoing dispute. The Council strongly believed that it had handed over all the information it was able. Whilst the person and people supporting him had every right to go through the full legal process, the Council genuinely believed it had handed everything over.

The Leader confirmed that he was happy to receive any further questions from T outside of the meeting and he would provide a written response. He stated that he had always been willing to have conversations and answer questions but he had not received any for some time.

2. Mr. Ashraf: What is Rotherham Borough Council's current legal and financial opinions and risk assessments on all its investments, including in SYPA and Borders to Coast, in light of the recent PSC legal opinion and can Rotherham Council evidence that it has urgently, acted prudently, with those investments, vis-a-vis its prevention and non-assistance duties under international and domestic law?

   The Leader explained that the Council did not invest in companies or in that kind of private investment. The investments held by South Yorkshire Pensions Authority were in fact held by the Border to Coast Pension Pool on behalf of the Pensions Authority. In law, the investments belonged to them, not the Council. The Council's view was that all investments did meet the necessary legal thresholds. The Leader committed to raising any specific concerns if there were any but confirmed that there were no ground for concerns at the moment.

   In his supplementary question, Mr. Ashraf firstly thanked Members and officers for their willingness to work with him and have frank conversations about what could and could not be done. The supplementary question was: Could the legal and financial risk to Rotherham Council and the taxpayers of non-compliance of urgently acting prudently vis-à-vis prevention and non-assistance duties in those investments under international and domestic law be given a detailed legal liabilities and monetary figure on a Rotherham Borough and a per taxpayer basis? He also asked if the Palestinian Flag would be flown on 29th November to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

   The Leader explained that he would request that officers provide a written response in relation to the investments. He stated that they would not be able to breakdown the information in the way requested but they would provide what they could. In relation to the flag, there was a question later on the agenda on this matter and the Leader would respond then.

3. Mr. Horvath: Selective Licensing was rejected overwhelmingly by formal questionnaires, why did Cabinet approve it?

   Mr. Horvath did not attend the meeting, and a written response would be provided.

4. Mr. Mabbott: Could you please confirm whether the Council intends to fly the Palestinian flag outside the Town Hall on 29th November to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and to reaffirm the Council's commitment to peace and human rights in the face of war crimes and genocide?

   The Leader stated that yes, the Council did expect to fly the Palestinian flag on 29th November 2025. There was an internal decision making process to be undertaken in the next week but it was

expected that the decision to fly the Palestinian flag would be approved.

In his supplementary question, Mr. Mabbott asked that the continued suffering of the people in Gaza be taken into account during the decision making process.

The Leader confirmed that it would.

78. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public.

79. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader was invited to present his statement. He noted the launch of a new campaign for Rotherham's new "Gateway" station which was part of a £300million regeneration plan that would put Rotherham back on the mainline for the first time in 40 years. The Leader and Councillor Williams had visited the site of the new tram stop at Magna. It was expected that trams should be stopping at the new station from early 2026. The Leader also reported that Davies Court Care Home in Dinnington had been rated good following a recent CQC inspection. He placed on record his congratulations and thanks to the team for their hard work. The Steel Minister, Chris McDonald MP, had visited the Liberty Steel sites in Stocksbridge and Parkgate along with the Leader, Chief Executive and colleagues from across South Yorkshire. The Leader believed that the conversations had been fruitful. The Leader confirmed that there was considerable commercial interest in taking on the sites and a real determination locally to protect jobs. The Leader had also written again to the Minister.

Members were asked to note the following upcoming events: Bonfire Night festivities in Clifton Park (on the evening of the Council meeting); Armistice Day and Remembrance Day on 9th November and the Christmas Lights Switch-on on Saturday, 15th November.

Finally, the Leader highlighted the Reclaim the Night walk taking place on Thursday, 27th November. This year the walk was being dedicated to the memory of Kimberley Fuller who was stabbed to death on 5th November 2005 on a night out in Rotherham town centre after she confronted a man for touching her. Her killer was later convicted for separate child abuse offences as part of Operation Stovewood. The Leader stated that he did not know how people kept going after their families were violated by such crimes. He could not begin to imagine the bravery that it took. Being a Councillor meant coming into contact with people in all sorts of difficult situations – homeless people, broken families, victims of violence – and as a Councillor, the task was to organise against the evil in our midst. Kimberley's family and friends had asked for her to be remembered as part of this year's Reclaim the Night to mark 20 years since her murder

and they would be attending the event. The Leader paid tribute to their courage and determination today as they continued to make the case against misogyny and sexual violence and for a more humane society. He asked the Chamber to pay their respects to Kimberley and her memory.

The Leader of the Majority Opposition Group, Councillor Z. Collingham, was invited to respond. He echoed the comments made in relation to Davies Court Care Home and he hoped the comments made by the Leader to the Steel Minister would lead to the retention of jobs for people in Rotherham and the wider region. He made references to the number of items on the agenda and stated that he hoped no one would curtail or close down debate. Councillor Collingham made reference to the letter which he had prepared in relation to opposing Whitestone Solar Farm and thanked the 41 Councillors who had co-signed it. He asked the Leader to tell John Healey MP to tell Ed Miliband MP to stop ruining swathes of countryside. Councillor Collingham also referenced the national CSE enquiry and the failure to appoint a chair as well as the rumours of a tax-rising budget on the horizon. He stated that regional business had warned the Chancellor that putting up taxes would be bad for business, and he asked the Leader how he would avoid passing tax rises onto residents and employers across Rotherham.

The Leader was invited to respond to Councillor Z. Collingham. With regard to the agenda, the Leader stated that it was not his intention to curtail debate, but he did ask Members to be reasonable and show restraint to ensure all motions could be debated. In relation to the Whitestone comments, the Leader stated that John Healey MP had already clearly stated his opposition to it. He noted that when Labour Councillors had asked Conservative Councillors to raise issues with the former Conservative Government, not once did they agree to. Yet now, they were asking a Labour MP to do something that he had already done. In relation to the CSE enquiry, the Leader stated that he had always expressed caution and concern about the national enquiry as it had never been clear exactly what was going to be looked into. However, the Leader stated that he would not take criticism from the Conservatives on this as their Government had been in power for 14 years, had held a National Enquiry that Professor Alexis Jay had spent 7 years producing, and had not implemented any of the recommendations. Regarding the Chancellor's budget, the Leader stated that the Conservative Government had cut personal taxes just prior to the General Election in 2024, knowing that it was unsustainable. The current Government, therefore, had to make difficult decisions in relation to the budget. The Leader did not think it would be the right to choice to embark on another round of austerity, cutting public spending, because that hurt those who could least afford it.

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

Councillor Currie thanked the Leader for mentioning Kimberley Fuller and Reclaim the Night. He noted that the Ward Councillors for Keppel were funding a memorial bench for her with the agreement of Kimberley's

family. Councillor Currie also thanked those involved for their work to try and keep the Steel plants operational. Finally, he noted that he, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester and Councillor Ryalls were putting on an event for Movember and welcomed all to buy tickets and attend.

The Leader thanked Councillor Currie for his comments.

Councillor Reynolds referenced the Whitestone development and the difficulties he had had trying to access information. In particular, he referenced the brownfield sites that had reportedly been rejected but he could find no evidence of them. He asked if the Council had received the rationale in the pre-planning process about not using the 41 brownfield sites.

The Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided by the Planning Service to Councillor Reynolds. He also agreed with the comments regarding the consultation and the inability to access simple information.

Councillor Ball referenced the death of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority member Councillor Charlie Hogarth and asked to place on record his condolences.

The Leader stated that he had not been aware of this and thanked Councillor Ball for bringing it to his attention.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester thanked the Leader for the work being done with Liberty Steel. He asked if anything was being looked at in terms of the brownfield sites around the Liberty Steel plants in order to support the steel industry and develop further communities and industries within Rotherham.

The Leader explained that the Government was aware of what the different options were, but it all depended on what commercial bids came forward and how the receiver was able to assess the value and sustainability of each of those bids.

80. PROPOSAL TO CREATE AN HONORARY FREEWOMAN OF THE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROTHERHAM

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval to create an Honorary Freewoman of the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham.

The report noted that under the Local Government Act 1972, the Council had the power to grant the title of Honorary Freewoman and Honorary Freeman of the Borough to persons of distinction who have rendered eminent service to the Borough. It was proposed that, in accordance with the Authority's protocol in respect of awarding this honour, that Christine Lunn MBE be considered to be made an Honorary Freewoman of the Borough in recognition of her outstanding service to Children and Young

People across the Borough as a Foster Carer with over 50 years' service and in recognition of fostering over 250 young people.

It was noted that the proposal had been endorsed by the Mayor, the Leader of the Council and the leaders of the Opposition Groups.

Resolved:

That, in pursuance of the provisions of Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in recognition of her outstanding service to Children and Young People across the Borough as a Foster Carer with over 50 years' service and in recognition of fostering over 250 young people, Christine Lunn MBE, be admitted Freedom of this Borough at an Extraordinary Council Meeting.

81. AMENDMENTS TO APPOINTMENTS OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PANELS

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the appointment of Members to Committees, Boards and Panels, as detailed in the Mayor's Letter.

The Head of Democratic Services had received notification that it had become necessary to make amendments to the appointment of Members to serve on the Committees, Boards, and Panels of the Council.

Section 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 stated that where the Council had determined the allocation to different Groups of the seats to which the Act applies, it was the duty of the Authority to give effect to a Group's wishes about who was to be appointed to the seats that they had been allocated.

Those Members not in a political group could still at the discretion of the Council, be allocated a due share of seats, although the Council would decide how to allocate seats to non-aligned councillors.

Resolved:

That approval be given to the appointment of Members to Committees, Boards and Panels, as detailed in the Mayor's Letter and stated below:

<u>Education Consultative Committee</u>
Councillor Read (Remove)
Councillor Steele (Add)

<u>Health Select Commission</u>
Councillor Bennett-Sylvester (Remove)
Councillor Harrison (Add)

Standards and Ethics Committee
Parish Councillor Lisa Gibbins (Wales)
Parish Councillor Tony Griffin (Whiston)
Parish Councillor Mark Senior (Thrybergh)

Appointed in accordance with the elections cycle for Rotherham – May 2028

Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation Joint Committee
Councillor Baker-Rogers (Remove)
Councillor McKiernan (Add)
Councillor Brent - Substitute (Add)

Mover: Councillor Read Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

82. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Community Safety Strategy, named the Safer Rotherham Partnership Strategy 2025-28, for approval. The Strategy had been recommended by Cabinet for approval at the 15th September 2025 meeting.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP), of which the Council was a key statutory partner, had agreed a new Safer Rotherham Partnership Strategy, setting out priorities and commitments for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March, 2028. The previous Safer Rotherham Partnership Strategy 2022-25 guided the Partnership in delivering significant work to protect vulnerable children and adults, build safer, stronger communities and tackle domestic abuse, serious violence and organised crime.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership had used an evidence-based approach to agree the new priorities, drawing on analysis of partnership crime and community safety data and the outcomes of a comprehensive programme of consultation to capture the views of key stakeholders, including people who lived, visited or worked in Rotherham. This process identified 3 main priorities that shaped the new Strategy: Safer Neighbourhoods; Tackling Violence, Abuse and Exploitation; and Preventing Offending and Building Resilience. The objective areas and commitments that sat under the priorities were detailed in paragraph 2.4 of the report.

Paragraph 2.5 of the report outlined the Cross Cutting Themes which impacted all community safety priorities. These were Online Crime; Service User Voice; and Equality.

Section 4 of the report and Appendix 2 to the report detailed the consultation outcomes. SRP partner agency consultation and data gathering took place from September 2024 and continued until the final draft strategy was circulated to SRP Board members prior to their meeting on 15th April, 2025, and the Strategy was finalised. The wider

stakeholder, Elected Member and public consultation on the proposed priorities ran from September 2024 to December 2024.

The outcome of the consultation was broadly supportive of the priority areas identified. In relation to the areas of focus, there were some variances but generally people thought the Partnership should focus on raising awareness and delivering prevention and early intervention activities. The full outcome of the consultation had been provided to each SRP priority lead to inform development of their action plans.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 16, Councillor Bacon moved the following amendment during the meeting: That the Council recommends to the Community Safety Partnership that they embed into the Strategy a way of combating anti-social behaviour. Councillor Bacon stated that the Strategy only mentioned tackling perceptions of anti-social behaviour and he simply wanted to ask the Partnership to embed a way of combating antisocial behaviour to make residents feel safe.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester seconded the amendment and asked if the idea could be explored, and proper structures put in place to deal with anti-social behaviour.

As the mover of the original motion, Councillor Alam addressed the amendment. He stated that, under legislation, the Safer Rotherham Partnership had a duty to tackle anti-social behaviour. Page 15 of the Strategy set out the Safer Rotherham Partnership Priorities for 2025-28 and that included Safer Neighbourhoods which involved all matters relating to anti-social behaviour.

On being put to the vote, the amendment fell.

The vote was then taken on the original recommendations.

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Adopt the Safer Rotherham Partnership Strategy.

2. Note the requirement for scrutiny of the Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report, which is discharged by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Mover: Councillor Alam Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

83. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - PROPOSED LICENSING ACT 2003 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Licensing Act 2003 – Statement of Licensing Policy. The Policy had been recommended by Cabinet for approval at the 15th September 2025 meeting.

Licensing officers presented a draft Policy to Cabinet in April 2025 and this Policy had been developed following a period of informal consultation with partner agencies, licence holders and members of the public, along with a review of other policies from across the UK to identify best practice that could be adopted in Rotherham. Following Cabinet approval, the draft Policy was then subjected to a 6 week period of consultation.

All responses to the consultation had been consolidated and reviewed. The significant majority of the responses indicated a general support for the proposals within the Policy, and therefore it was recommended that the draft Policy agreed by Cabinet in April was accepted as the final version of the 2025–2030 Statement of Policy.

The Policy promoted environmental best practice as set out in paragraph 2.15 of the report. It also provided advice and guidance on the practical steps licensed venues could take to keep women safe as detailed in paragraph 2.17. The Policy recognised that premises operating hours could have a significant impact on local residents, the economy and the local area. It therefore set out a number of core hours that were applicable to each type of licensed premises. Specific areas relevant to each class of premises were also set out. Further detail was included regarding large events as detailed in paragraph 2.23.

Resolved:

That Council adopt the proposed Licensing Act 2003 Statement of Policy.

Mover: Councillor Williams Seconder: Councillor Hughes

84. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Local Development Scheme for adoption. An updated Local Development Scheme was required to reflect the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024 and the significantly increased housing target for Rotherham, which necessitated a new Local Plan. The housing target for Rotherham had more than doubled from 544 to 1,111 new homes a year.

Officers had an advisory visit from the Planning Inspectorate in January 2025 to explore options for continuing the Core Strategy Partial Update. However, given the significant uplift to Rotherham's housing target and

the likely changes to the distribution of growth around the Borough this implied, the Inspector's clear advice was to prepare a complete new Local Plan under the new plan-making system. Continuing with the Core Strategy Partial Update would result in a significant risk of the Local Plan not being found sound during the Examination in Public by a Planning Inspector and would, therefore, not be fit to be adopted by the Council, resulting in abortive work, wasted time and considerable expense. The updated LDS therefore replaced the Core Strategy Partial Update and set out a timetable to produce a new Local Plan. This course of action was unavoidable, given the Government's changes to the NPPF and the imposition of a much higher housing target on Rotherham.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill published in March 2025 introduced Spatial Development Strategies (SDS), to be prepared by combined authorities. The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) would be responsible for preparing the SDS for South Yorkshire, in conjunction with the constituent local authorities. Local plans had to be in general conformity with the SDS. The Council was working with the other South Yorkshire authorities of Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield to prepare a new Joint Waste Plan, to replace the Plan adopted in 2012. Work was ongoing to reconsider the scope and content of the Joint Waste Plan and its relationship with the emerging South Yorkshire SDS, given the strategic nature of waste planning. Due to this new requirement, it was not possible for the LDS to give a timetable to prepare a Joint Waste Plan at present.

The LDS did not cover the detailed content of the new Local Plan or other Local Plan documents nor the process for preparing and consulting on them. Any future draft documents would be subject to separate reports requiring Cabinet or Council approval prior to public consultation, submission and adoption. The milestones for the new Local Plan were summarised at paragraph 2.5 of the report with Adoption of the Plan by Council being in July 2029.

The cost of producing the LDS had been managed within existing budgets. The adoption of the LDS set out a timeline for completion of the Local Plan and South Yorkshire Waste Plan. There was no provision for these costs, which were estimated to be £1.1m and as such, would need to be considered as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process and Medium Term Financial Strategy update. These plans, and future plans, would need to be incorporated into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Councillor Williams, in moving the recommendations, stated that it was the belief of the Council that the housing targets set for Rotherham were wrong.

Councillor Currie asked if Planning Board Members could be provided with Legal Advice relating to their role on Planning Board and how the Local Development Scheme would impact this.

Resolved:

1. That Council adopts the Local Development Scheme.

Mover: Councillor Williams Seconder: Councillor Mault

85. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FROM BRAMLEY AND RAVENFIELD

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Bramley and Ravenfield 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.

Councillor Duncan noted the 3 Ward priorities which related to improving road safety and addressing crime and anti-social behaviour; improving the environment and enhancing community facilities and bringing people together and improving mental and physical wellbeing. Work had been done with many local organisations and community groups, including the local parish councils. Work done included assisting with Parliament week and litter picks. Speeding and road safety was a particular concern outside Ravenfield Primary School and work was being done to address this. Fly tipping, particularly in rural areas, had been an issue and work was progressing to install CCTV to tackle this problem.

Councillor Reynolds made particular reference to the Whitestone Solar Farm and the negative impact it would have on Bramley and Ravenfield in particular. He implored everyone to do everything they could to object to the proposal. Councillor Reynolds thanked Councillor Duncan for the work she had done since becoming a Ward Councillor in 2024 and noted that they had worked very well together.

Both Members noted the invaluable support they had received from their Neighbourhoods Team, particularly Nicola Hacking and Nicola Fletcher.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

86. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FROM BRINSWORTH

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Brinsworth 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.

Councillor A. Carter stated that it was a privilege to be able to represent Brinsworth and do his bit as part of local devolution. He noted the work that he been done through the Towns and Villages Fund to get the parking outside the Brinsworth shops sorted. He hoped to see more devolution to Ward Councillors in order to benefit all areas of the Borough.

Councillor C. Carter highlighted particular projects that had been delivered such as bulb planting and crafts with school children. A family fitness session was being planned for after Easter in 2026 and work was being done to reduce dog fouling. She also noted the work done to improve the parking around the shops and stated that it had given the area a facelift and improved safety.

Both Members thanked their Neighbourhood Officers, particularly Mandy Ardron, Andrea Peers and Kyley Taylor.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked to what extent was the usage of all budgets related to the needs of the community or needs of upcoming elections?

Councillor A. Carter stated that the spending had nothing to do with elections but simply that 2024 had been the start of a new cycle and new projects took time to plan.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

87. NOTICE OF MOTION - WATSONS TIP DROPPINGWELL

It was moved by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Currie that:

Summary/Background:

This Council understands that the Environment Agency undertook a permit variation of an historic permit “Watsons Tip Droppingwell” in December 2016. Residents had always been aware of the reported dangerous substances that were tipped into phase 1 of the site between 1958 and 1989, these substances were both in liquid and solid forms and included barrels of cyanide and various heavy metals from local steel production facilities. In 1989 it was also discovered that the site was also receiving medical waste and some of this was being discovered in the nearby aptly named “Sicley Brook“. This gave rise to a big concern around local environmental health risks and testing of the site leading to a public enquiry.

In 2016 the Environment Agency supplied the names of two EA officers to a consultant working for Grange Landfill Ltd, who in their words “had done this before” and could help them get around the issues. The “issues” referred to related to the inability of the company to navigate a way

around the legislation contained within the European Landfill Directive to allow the re-opening of the site due to its previous “toxic” history. We presume the officers obliged with the advice (no physical records of the meeting exist, only a note that phone calls took place) and in December 2016 the EA issued a variation without any public or local authority consultation.

The Permit variation was a substantial document and included 5 pre-requisite actions required by the operator prior to the permit variation allowing the commencement of landfilling at the site. One of those pre-requisites was the implementation of a QA assured ground water and gas monitoring regime that tested both phase1 and phase 2 of the site, something that should have been in place since 1978, however, this had never been enforced. In January 2017 the site owner sunk 5 boreholes around the whole site and 4 boreholes directly into the waste mass in phase 1. During this process, a previous Councillor of this Authority asked the contractors why they had removed themselves from the phase one site after drilling 3 of the 4 holes, he was told by the site foreman that, in the 9 acre site drilling with a 4 inch drill 2 of the holes had hit a “marzipan smell” this is the smell that Cyanide gives off, he also said that “they were not made aware of the site contents and didn’t bring any PPE for working on a contaminated site”. After this conversation became public the site owner brought in a second contractor to complete the works and within 6 weeks the first contractor went into liquidation.

The material from these boreholes was left in a public area for several days, in clear plastic bags, before being sent for Lab testing. One of the boreholes BH5 was drilled outside of the permitted area on public land and on 2 occasions was accidentally destroyed by contractors who were asked to “plane the walkway” due to severe rutting caused by vehicle movements. In early November 2019 concerns were raised with the EA that test results from BH5 were still being submitted to the EA as part of the testing regime despite the hole being filled in around July/ August 2019. The EA undertook a “botched investigation” and due to Covid regulation conducted most of the work via phone calls with the operator. Despite being provide with photos containing meta data showing date and time stamps, in March 2019 the EA decided that they would believe the contractor’s end of year report, where the operator claimed, “the borehole had been vandalised by members of the public” and they were not able to take any more samples in November 2019.

BH5 has now been inactive “using the operator’s own timeline” since November 2019 and no attempts have been made to rectify this situation. Part of the EA’s reassurance to the public, they committed to undertake quarterly inspections of the site; recently this has reduced to “looking over the fence”. The reason given on several occasions is that “the site is currently not active”. This statement is factually incorrect; the site according to the EA has remained an “active site “ since 1978 and at no point has the site been classed as inactive, only phase 1 has been marked as in Closure. What the EA are referring to is there is no landfilling

taking place on site, however, this doesn't consider that the Monitoring of the site for water and gas monitoring purposes must be undertaken "continuously" throughout the life of the site and whilst in post-site closure. Effectively the EA have failed in its Public Health duty for over 5 years to enforce the monitoring (as per the permit pre-conditions).

The Council also understands that a second pre-condition is that the operator must construct cells within the new phase; the work on this started back in 2021 and rapidly ramped up to over 100 30-ton lorries visiting site daily. This saw the import of over 160,000 tons of material. The material used was for the construction of bunds around the first cell, it was quickly realised that the location and size of the cell was in contradiction of the 1958 planning permission. Despite the construction size being raised as an error in the original permit variation, the EA took the view that during any construction phase they had the power to vary any part of the construction so long as it still met QA certification.

During the construction of Berms of this size, the operator is required to supply QA data from a competent engineer showing construction materials used and compaction data. Again, despite regular requests, the EA have decided that they will wait for the final construction certification to ask for these assessments, this was completed over 2 years ago and no certificate has been forthcoming. In the last 2 Compliance Assessment Reports carried out over a year ago the EAs own inspector noted "large structural cracks within the Berm construction"; this is symptomatic of the wrong material being used, inappropriate water content and should have been picked up in the inspections. The "so what" is that the north-west side of this cell is on the opposite side of a Hawthorne hedge, to a public footpath and increases in height to over 10m high, creating a risk of the public being court
in any possible landslide.

That this Council:

Believes that due to the list of ongoing failures by the EA to keep the site compliant with the varied permit for over 5 years and the operators unwillingness to comply with requirement to supply QA certification for the Berm on completion in a timely manner, that the EA now not only have the ability, but also a Public Health duty to remove the permit variation and require the site to be returned to its natural state, as prior to 2016.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Request that the Chief Executive writes to the Secretary of State for the Environment, to request a full and open public enquiry into the variation of the original permit, the way in which the permit was issued, and full consideration of all the failures of the Environment Agency to regulate and ensure compliance under its own variation for over 5 years.

2. Request that consideration be given to remove the historical planning permission for phase 2 of the site, for non-compliance of the 1958 permission and that any future applications for planning be judged against current legislation.

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

88. NOTICE OF MOTION - FAIRNESS FOR GARDEN WASTE USERS

It was moved by Councillor Ball and seconded by Councillor Bacon that:

This Council notes:

- The Brown Bin Garden Waste Collection Service, for which residents pay an annual subscription fee, was suspended with immediate effect from early August 2025 due to a staff shortage, with disruptions continuing well beyond the initial end-of-August resumption date.

- This suspension and subsequent delays have led to widespread inconvenience, with many subscribers unable to dispose of garden waste through the service they have paid for, forcing them to seek alternative disposal methods at significant personal cost, often exceeding the value of any proposed compensation.

- The Council's offer of a £10 refund or discount on next year's subscription has been widely criticised as inadequate and insulting, failing to address the full extent of the disruption or the financial burden placed on residents.

- These service failures have disproportionately affected vulnerable groups, including disabled residents who rely on the Brown Bin Service for accessible waste management and have faced additional hardships in managing garden waste without it.

- Public confidence in the leadership of the Council's Waste Management Service has been severely eroded, as evidenced by ongoing complaints and media coverage highlighting persistent issues.

This Council believes:

- Subscribers to the Brown Bin Service deserve fair treatment and full compensation for a service that has not been delivered as promised, rather than token gestures that do not reflect the true costs incurred by residents.

- Waiving the subscription fees for the affected period is essential to restore trust in the Council's ability to provide reliable public services and to prevent further alienation of ratepayers.

- Continuing to charge full fees amid such disruptions undermines the principles of accountability and value for money expected from local government.

- Prioritising resident welfare, particularly for disabled and vulnerable individuals, must be at the heart of any response to service failures, and that the current approach falls short of this standard.

This Council resolves to:

1. Offer residents who subscribed to the 2025 Brown Bin Garden Waste Service a waived subscription fee for the 2026 service, provided they take up the offer to continue their subscription in 2026, as compensation for issues experienced this year.

2. Issue a public apology to affected residents, acknowledging the inadequacy of the £10 offer and the broader impacts of the service disruption.

3. Conduct an independent review of the Garden Waste Service incorporating feedback from residents, including disabled users and present these findings to the Executive for their consideration and decision on any subsequent actions.

4. Explore options for enhancing support for vulnerable residents, such as assisted collections, to prevent similar disproportionate impacts in future.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 19 (2) Councillor Ball had requested that a recorded vote should be taken on the proposed motion. Five Members stood to show their support for a recorded vote to be taken on the motion. The vote was as follows:

For (21): Councillors Bacon, Ball, Baum-Dixon, Bennett-Sylvester, Blackham, Bower, A. Carter, C. Carter, Castledine-Dack, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Elliott, Fisher, Harrison, Hussain, Reynolds, Stables, Tarmey, Thorp, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Against (31): Councillor Adair, Ahmed, Alam, Allen, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Beck, Beresford, Brent, Clarke, Cowen, Cusworth, Duncan, Garnett, Harper, Hughes, Ismail, Jackson, Jones, Keenan, Lelliott, Mault, McKiernan, Monk, Rashid, Read, Sheppard, Steele, Sutton, Taylor and Williams.

Abstentions (1): Councillor Currie.

89. NOTICE OF MOTION - STANDING UP FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

It was moved by Councillor Baum-Dixon and seconded by Councillor Z. Collingham that:

This Council believes:

Rotherham deserves a Council that values its rural communities as vital to the Borough's wellbeing, sustainability, and prosperity. By passing this motion, we commit to ensuring rural areas receive the attention and support they need to thrive.

This Council notes:

1. That 70% of Rotherham is rural, providing vital space for recreation, wellbeing, and biodiversity, while being home to communities that face unique challenges in accessing services, infrastructure and protecting against rural crime.

2. That the current system of determining eligibility for free school transport is based on distance measured "as the crow flies." While this system works in urban areas with direct links to schools, it disadvantages rural pupils who may live within distance catchment but have to travel significantly further due to indirect routes and lack of safe, direct paths.

3. That rural communities are often poorly connected to public transport, impeding access to essential public services, including health and wellbeing services.

4. That responsibility for public transport, particularly buses, now rests with the South Yorkshire Mayor, and that the Leader of the Council, in his role with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), should ensure the needs of rural communities are taken into account during the rollout of the new publicly owned transport system.

5. That access to reliable 5G mobile phone service and high-speed internet is essential for rural residents and businesses, yet many areas, including parts of Rotherham, face significant connectivity gaps.

6. That rural crime, including off-road bikes, cannabis cultivation and fly-tipping on farmland, leave many rural residents feeling unsafe and lead to financial hardship for landowners and damage to our environment. Effective and timely collaboration and deployment by South Yorkshire's Rural and Off-Road Policing Team is vital in the fight against rural crime.

7. That rural communities, particularly farmers, act as custodians of our environment, safeguarding wildlife, promoting sustainability, and leading efforts to combat climate change.

8. That many family farms are asset-rich but cash-poor, with profitability often disconnected from land values. Such farms are at risk of forced sale due to Government reforms to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR). The National Farmers Union (NFU) estimates that around 75% of working farms could be affected, with a typical cereal farm making a profit of £34,000 and being hit with 10 annual tax instalments of £53,000, over 1.5 times its profits.

This Council resolves to:

1. Develop a Rural Strategy for Rotherham, prioritising transport, digital access, healthcare, and economic opportunities tailored to rural needs.

2. Work with, encourage, and facilitate the installation of 5G infrastructure in rural areas, like Woodsetts and Thorpe Hesley, while ensuring that culturally significant sites are respected.

3. Ensure rural issues are considered in all Council policies and decisions at both Borough-wide and local levels.

4. Advocate for improved public transport access for rural areas, including public services and school routes, by working with SYMCA and the South Yorkshire Mayor to ensure rural needs are prioritised in the rollout of the new publicly owned transport system.

5. Review the criteria for free school transport, exploring a test based on the shortest accessible route from home to school, rather than "as the crow flies," to ensure rural pupils are not unfairly excluded from support.

6. Work with South Yorkshire Police to address rural and wildlife crime, pushing for an expanded Off-Road team, with a dedicated Rotherham unit, and call on RMBC officers to regularly attend Rural Crime and Off-Road Policing meetings.

7. Recognise and support farmers, particularly family farmers, as key custodians of our environment, promoting biodiversity, sustainability, and climate resilience.

8. Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to call for the reversal of APR and BPR restriction in this year’s Budget, supporting family farmers in Rotherham.

9. Explore additional Council-led initiatives to support rural businesses, including strengthening local food networks, improving rural infrastructure, and advocating for fairer funding for rural communities.

On being put to the vote, the motion was lost.

90. NOTICE OF MOTION - PROPOSED WHITESTONE SOLAR FARM

It was moved by Councillor Baggaley and seconded by Councillor Duncan that:

Summary/Background:

The proposal for a 750 MW solar farm across Rotherham and Doncaster is likely to be the first Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project to apply for planning permission in the Local Authority area. The motion calls on the developers to hear the concern of the community, withdraw their proposal, and significantly scale back any future proposals.

That this Council notes:

1. Proposals for the Whitestone Solar Farm, which would stretch from Conisbrough in the north to Woodall in the South, a total area of 2,000 hectares, have recently completed their pre-statutory consultation phase. It would potentially be the largest solar farm operating in the United Kingdom.

2. The proposal has already attracted significant local concerns. It would disrupt more than 60 rights of way, force significant traffic for construction and maintenance along narrow countryside roads, remove land from agricultural use, and alter the appearance and “landscape value” of miles of local countryside. It would be an impact on an historic scale.

3. If developed as it is currently proposed, there is no clear benefit to local communities. Residents who would face the most direct consequences of the development are not currently expected to see any direct benefits to their energy bills, or local employment.

4. The concern of residents about the nature of the consultation taken so far, which have been technical and abstract, with hard copies of materials only available at considerable expense to consultees.

Further notes:

1. The objections made to the developers by all 3 Rotherham MPs, and by a cross-party group of local Councillors, as well as a number of affected local Parish Councils.

2. The January 2025 motion agreed by this Council on a cross-party basis, which calls for solar panels on buildings to be prioritised over those in undeveloped countryside.

3. The Leader of the Council has written to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to express the concerns of the community that allowing a development free for all, rather than a managed process of solar farm expansion especially in more rural areas, will undermine support for the Government's Net Zero ambitions.

4. Moreover, there is a risk that confidence in potentially more acceptable, smaller scale solar farm proposals is undermined by industrial scale proposals of this nature.

5. The Whitestone proposal is not expected to make a formal application to the Planning system until May 2026 at which point it will be determined by the Government as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).

6. That technical aspects of the Planning process, including production of a Local Impact Report, will be undertaken by the Council's Planning officers. This process must be undertaken impartially, in line with the requirements of Planning rules, in order to protect the integrity of the process and the best interests of council tax payers. This work will be reported to the Planning Board on a quarterly basis, in accordance with the decision of Cabinet on 20th October 2025.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Express its view that the current Whitestone proposal does not enjoy the support of this Full Council.

2. Calls on the developer to heed the views of the Borough's elected representatives at all levels, withdraw their current proposal, hear the voices of local residents, and significantly scale back any future proposals.

3. Support steps to ensure that local communities are fully informed about the process should a Planning application be made, to ensure that local views, experience and expertise can be heard throughout.

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

91. NOTICE OF MOTION - STOP PROFITEERING FROM CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15 (10) a period of no more than 90 minutes was permitted for the discussion of Notices of Motion. As consideration of this motion was after the 90 minute time limit, it was, in accordance with Procedure Rule 15 (11) moved, seconded and voted on without debate.

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

T**his Council notes:**

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system is under severe strain, with some families struggling to secure vital support. Children with SEND deserve the same opportunities as every child, including access to the support they need to thrive.

In December 2024 the Government introduced the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, with the overall of better protecting children and raising standards in education. The Government also announced £740 million in new funding to support students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, and those needing alternative education within mainstream schools. Inclusion remains the overarching policy, so that as many of our children and young people as possible are educated together with their peers in their own community.

Research commissioned by the Liberal Democrats has revealed that private equity–backed SEND providers are making over £100 million a year in profits, with some achieving margins of over 20%. Many of these companies are backed by firms registered in tax havens or foreign sovereign wealth funds.

Meanwhile, councils across the country face spiralling costs, severe budget pressures, and in some cases effective bankruptcy - leading to the reduction or withdrawal of vital services for vulnerable groups.

This Council welcomes:

1. Government action to curb profiteering in Children's Social Care. Through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, it has introduced powers to cap the profits of providers of illegal or exploitative children's homes, alongside enhancing financial transparency and greater enforcement by Ofsted.

2. The Government review of the SEND and Alternative Provision systems.

This Council believes:

1. Whilst there is potentially a role for some independent or private provision – profiteering from the needs of children with SEND is unacceptable and must end.

2. Children with SEND are not commodities for profit and should never be treated as such.

3. Resources must be directed into improving provision and outcomes for children, not into shareholder dividends or inflated executive pay.

4. Local authorities should be supported to provide sustainable, high-quality inclusive SEND provision within both their mainstream and specialist settings; including by building and operating their own schools to accommodate those with the most complex needs if necessary.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Call on the Government to eradicate profiteering by private SEND providers, including consideration of sanctions against providers, where necessary.

2. Support further reforms to boost the SEND system, including strong financial oversight of providers, transparency, and new powers and funding for councils to build and manage local mainstream and specialist provision directly.

3. Endorse the principle that SEND reforms must put children first - not corporate greed.

4. Request group leaders to write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask that action is taken in line with the above.

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

92. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 15th September 2025 and 20th October 2025.

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 15th September 2025 and 20th October 2025, be received.

Mover: Councillor Read Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

93. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:

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

Mover: Councillor Baggaley Seconder: Councillor Allen

94. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board be noted.

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

95. 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 Garnett Seconder: Councillor Steele

96. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:

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

Mover: Councillor Mault Seconder: Councillor Jackson

97. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved:

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

Mover: Councillor Clarke Seconder: Councillor Lelliott

98. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There was one question from Councillor Yasseen:

1. Could the Spokesperson outline what action the Panel is taking, in partnership with South Yorkshire Police and other agencies, in light of survivor testimonies alleging that some serving police officers were involved in abusing victims during grooming investigations, and what assurances can be given to survivors that these claims are being fully investigated?

Councillor Harper, the designated Spokesperson on South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel, stated that the Panel was deeply concerned by recent survivor testimonies alleging that serving officers within South Yorkshire Police might have been involved in the abuse of victims during grooming investigations. These accounts were deeply distressing and represented a serious breach of public trust.

At the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 15th September 2025, Members heard from the Deputy Mayor for Policing and were told that:

- A criminal investigation into any police involvement in the Rotherham grooming scandal based on claims in the media was already taking place, led by South Yorkshire Police (SYP) under the direction of the national watchdog – the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).

- In response to concerns from victims about the suitability of these arrangements there was a joint request by SYP and the IOPC for the National Crime Agency (NCA) to take over and continue the investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse by former SYP officers. Full responsibility for the investigation had now been handed over to the NCA.

- It was critical that victims and survivors felt heard, believed, and supported, and they must have confidence in the people and systems that were there to make sure justice was done. On this basis the transfer to the NCA was welcomed as an important acknowledgement of these concerns.

The Panel received assurances that the Deputy Mayor would be keeping this situation under close review and would provide regular updates to the Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor Harper encouraged anyone who had not yet come forward to do so; all experiences would be treated with the seriousness, dignity, and the care they deserved.

Councillor Harper confirmed that he would pass on an update after the December 2025 meeting of the Panel via email if Councillor Yasseen wanted this. In her supplementary question, Councillor Yasseen confirmed that she did want these updates and Councillor Harper committed to provide them.

99. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 13 questions:

1. Councillor Bacon: The invasion of thugs racing on the A57 is putting residents at risk - when will the Council finally act, implement a PSPO, put pressure on the police, and stamp this out before somebody dies?

   Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, explained that the Council wanted to see the end of this type of criminal and anti-social use of vehicles and it understood the frustrations of residents that Councillor Bacon had raised. Officers continued to work with the Police and others, such as the retail outlets whose land was sometimes used, to prevent and deter the behaviour. At present, while a draft proposal had been considered, there were several factors that meant the Council were not currently pursuing a PSPO in this area.

   Firstly Councillor Alam had been advised that in terms of the data needed to legally justify a PSPO, this did not exist or was not of sufficient quality. He therefore encouraged people to report these issues to the Police as often as they could when they witnessed them.

   It was also important to note that many of the behaviours associated with vehicle nuisance could already be addressed using existing legislation and enforcement powers. There was a concern that a PSPO might not offer any additional capabilities beyond what was currently available.

   Councillor Alam was happy to ask officers to meet with Councillor Bacon to discuss this in more detail.

   In his supplementary question, Councillor Bacon confirmed that he would be happy to meet with officers. He disputed the answer provided regarding PSPO's not offering additional powers to the Police as they had been used across the Country where racing was a problem. He asked Councillor Alam, as an elected official, to tell officers that a PSPO needed to happen there. Data was not needed to know that hundreds of people were racing on the A57, putting lives at risk and impacting the fire station.

   Councillor Alam confirmed that he would ask officers to meet with Councillor Bacon.

2. Councillor Bacon: The Council raised the cost of the Brown Bin Service, it raised Council Tax, people are paying more and getting less from this service. Does the Council understand that this so-called 'refund' is insulting given the huge failure?

   As the Cabinet Member, Councillor Marshall, was not at the meeting, a written response would be provided.

3. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can you please explain how tenants will be able to influence the Selective Licensing Steering Group in a way that is safe from the types of landlord coercion that we have witnessed throughout the consultation process?

   Councillor Beresford, Cabinet Member for Housing, explained that the terms of reference for the stakeholder group had not yet been fully developed, but the importance of ensuring that tenants could participate in a way that was both meaningful and safe was recognised.

   It was appreciated that some tenants could be uncomfortable expressing their views directly to landlords, or their representatives. The Council aimed to provide a number of routes where tenants could provide input to the Steering Group and would discuss the best models with interested parties. The solutions could take the form of anonymous opportunities for tenant input, independent tenant representation on the steering groups, providing safe spaces for engagement as part of the work of the groups as well as clear reporting mechanisms and ongoing monitoring and review of any arrangements established.

   The Council was committed to creating a space where tenants felt empowered to contribute without fear, and it welcomed ongoing dialogue to strengthen these protections.

4. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What measures will be taken to ensure the Pride of Place programme does not lead to highly deprived communities just outside its geographic scope such as Dalton, Munsbrough and Thrybergh being even more left behind neighbourhoods?

   Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy explained that the Council welcomed the significant, long term investments being made by the Government. Of course it wanted to see more, but that was not a reason not to be positive about the resources coming to Rotherham communities.

   The Phase 1 Pride in Place geography was prescribed by Government and focussed on the most heavily populated central area of the Borough - covering a population of 71,600 - including the Town Centre.

   Despite the prescribed geography, the way in which the funding would be delivered had the potential to improve the lives of those living both within and outside of the identified spatial area. The Phase 1 fund would deliver improved access to health provision, better safety and security, and access to skills and employment opportunities – the impact of which would be felt more widely than the prescribed geography.

Of course, it was recognised that more funding over a wider area would be welcome, and this was why the Council continued to invest in place-based improvements right across the Borough.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that one of the concerns he had was that some of the areas such as Dalton, Thrybergh and Munsbrough for instance, were net contributors into the Housing Revenue Account with the way that neighbourhood budgets were funded. The deprivation figures released previously were incredibly depressing and Rotherham was seeing growing gaps between the highly priced central belt and areas particularly in the south of the Borough. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked whether the Council could make it policy that anything it looked at should be attuned towards narrowing the gap between the highly deprived SOAs, the 21% Rotherham had in total across the Borough, and those less deprived. He asked if the Council could enshrine that as an actual function in this and other regeneration products that whatever it did had to look towards narrowing those gaps?

Councillor Williams accepted the challenge Councillor Bennett-Sylvester had raised and acknowledged that deprivation and inequality was a challenge for all in the Chamber. He agreed to take the queries away. Councillor Williams was, however, proud of the work done by the Labour administration to tackle deprivation and inequality, such as investment in community facilities, the Council's house building programme, the Towns and Villages Fund, Our Places Funds, road investment etc.

5. Councillor Ball: Could you please provide details on the number of financial penalties, each up to £30,000, that have been issued in Rotherham as an alternative to prosecution for unlicensed properties since Selective Licensing was first introduced in 2015?

   As Councillor Ball was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

6. Councillor Ball: Could you please provide details on the number of successful prosecutions by RMBC for unlicensed properties in Rotherham that have resulted in unlimited fines since Selective Licensing was first introduced in 2015?

   As Councillor Ball was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

7. Councillor Reynolds: Why, in the face of absolute rejection by the people of Rotherham for the Whitestones project, are the Labour Government and Labour Council not 100% behind the people that elected them?

Councillor Williams explained that a motion had been passed in the meeting by all political groups, rejecting the proposals. A cross-party approach had been taken on the issue which recognised the substantial concerns that had been raised. Councillor Williams thanked Councillor Collingham for his submission and confirmed that, as Cabinet Member, he had written in to the consultation precisely to reflect the strength of local concerns. The Leader had also written a strong letter to the Secretary of State so much action had been taken at a local level.

8. Councillor Reynolds: Can the solar power plan for the refurbishment of the new Markets be shared please?

   Councillor Williams explained that the solar power plan for the new markets was:

   - Installation of rooftop solar PVs with panels mounted on the new outside market roof structure, feeding into the new single metered supply for the Market; and

   - Installation of rooftop solar PVs mounted on the new library roof as part of the redevelopment, connected to the building's internal distribution board and supporting its fully electric systems.

   The combined capacity was approximately 203 kW across the 2 schemes. The combined scheme was expected to generate approximately 150,000 kWh per annum, displacing 27 tCO2e [tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent] per year, compared with grid average electricity supply.

   The Council believed that this would deliver significant benefits of reduced energy costs, carbon savings and supporting local traders at the Market through lower electricity charges.

9. Councillor Ball: Could you please provide details on the number of Rent Repayment Orders that have been granted by tribunals in relation to unlicensed properties in Rotherham, enabling recovery of up to 12 months' rent or Housing Benefit/Universal Credit, since Selective Licensing was first introduced in 2015?

   As Councillor Ball was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

10. Councillor Thorp: Can you confirm how the Council has implemented the motion on solar panels passed on the 15th of January. The Council resolved to adopt a political stance on solar panels on rooftops of commercial buildings, public buildings, car parks, and encourage the use of brown field sites instead of farmland being eaten up by solar farms.

Councillor Williams explained that a motion is an expression of a political view and such a motion did not have a binding effect on, for example, the Planning Board. It was confirmed that there were no national or local planning policies that required brownfields or roofs to be used instead of far land. However, the Council was acting on the political view expressed in terms of the Whitestone proposals. Further, the Council were putting solar panels on the market and library development, on the car park at Drummond Street and on Riverside House so locally, the Council was promoting the political stance passed in the motion.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp stated that it sounded like the Council had ignored the motion. He asked if something could be included in Planning Policy to ensure new build housing had to have solar panels and electric vehicle charging points.

Councillor Williams stated that the Council had not ignored the motion, as evidenced by the examples given in the previous answer. He committed to raising the matter of what could be done within Planning Policy with officers but explained that there would be the opportunity to discuss these kinds of ideas and suggestions as part of the Local Development Scheme which had been agreed earlier in the meeting.

11. Councillor Yasseen: Does the Leader of Rotherham Council believe that ignorance is now an acceptable defence for landlords committing criminal housing offences (Section 95(1) Housing Act 200), or is that defence a privilege reserved for senior Labour politicians, like the Chancellor Rachel Reeves?

    The Leader stated that he believed that everyone in public life should do their best to follow the rules and pay their bills. He asked if Councillor Yasseen agreed.

    In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that Chancellor, Rachel Reeves had admitted to failing to apply for a Selective Licence, highlighting that even councils like Southwark did not know who all the landlords were. She asked, given Rotherham's Selective Licencing proposal, and the fact it had already been running for 10 years, how will the Council ensure every landlord knew that they had to apply and how would the Council identify unlicensed properties?

    The Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided with the details but there was now legislation that required all landlords to register under the Renters Rights Act so there was a legal obligation on landlords to come forward. The Leader stated that the difference between him and Councillor Yassen on this subject was that he believed that when someone was running a business, which was what a landlord was doing, they should be aware of the legal requirements and regulations that they had to operate under and they should follow

them. The Leader believed that Councillor Yasseen was arguing that landlords should be able to get away with not following the rules and he did not believe that was acceptable.

12. Councillor Yasseen: Please confirm how many individuals or households the Council has placed at the Carlton Park Hotel as temporary accommodation during each of the following periods:

    - April 2024 to March 2025
    - April 2025 to October 2025
    - And the number currently placed as of today?

    Councillor Beresford explained that the Council had increased the portfolio of self-contained temporary accommodation provision by 45 units, taking the total to 173 units, which were situated across the Borough. This had helped to reduce the use of hotels. For example, in May 2024 there were 88 households placed into hotels, and as at end of October 2025, this had reduced to 13 single person households. The average length of stay in hotels was kept to a minimum as the aim was always to move people into more stable accommodation as quickly and safely as possible.

    The number of new placements in the Carlton Park Hotel had been reducing: between 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 there were 286 such households, with the average placement at 17.9 nights per month. Between 1st April and 4th November 2025, there were 111, at an average of 11.9 nights per month.

    In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that that the Carlton Park scenario was a really good example of how one policy could have such a detrimental impact when it was not properly consulted on. When the decision was made by the Council to use Carlton Park, anti-social behaviour had gone up 5 times. Councillor Yasseen asked what lessons the Council had learned from this and how will it be engaging local residents and Councillors to manage housing pressures differently?

    Councillor Beresford explained that she was not around at the time of the situation Councillor Yassen had described. However, she was committed to learning from past experiences and, where possible, engaging with local communities via consultation. It was noted, however, that consultation was not always possible, particularly during emergency situations.

13. Councillor Yasseen: Could the Cabinet Member please confirm how many businesses in Rotherham Town Centre have received support through the £270,000 High Street Regeneration Fund, and of these how many are owned or led by ethnic minority business owners?

Councillor Williams stated that the Fund was not just for the Town Centre but covered 5 areas, the others being Swinton, Maltby, Wath and Dinnington. It was a £270,000 scheme to help support small business, shops and local high streets across the Borough. The Scheme had been oversubscribed, and the level of demand had been very high. Councillor Williams confirmed that the Council were actively looking at additional funding to be able to support as many of the applications as possible. It was hoped that progress would be made on this over the next few weeks and Councillor Williams would be able to provide more information after that time.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen explained that she had received lots of emails and phone calls from concerned ethnic minority-led businesses as it was felt that they got little support from the regeneration funding schemes. She felt that there was a disparity and inequity in the Council's approach

Councillor Williams explained that he would be happy to discuss the issues raised with Councillor Yasseen when the final allocations had been made. He did reiterate that the funding needed to be spread fairly across the eligible areas.

100. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.