

COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday 22 April 2026

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

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

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

133. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor reported on the death of former Councillor Alan Buckley who had served on the Council from 2010-2021 and had been Mayor for the 2018/19 Municipal Year. The Mayor sent her sympathy to Mr Buckley's family and asked all present to observe a minute's silence.

Throughout the meeting, Members expressed their sympathies for former Councillor Buckley's family and noted how dedicated he had been to his local community.

A full list of mayoral engagements was set out in Appendix A to the Mayor's Letter.

134. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Baggaley, Ball, Baum-Dixon, Castledine-Dack, Knight, Pitchley and Tarmey.

135. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETINGS

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council meetings held on 14 January, 4 March and 13 March 2026.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 14 January, 4 March and 13 March 2026 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

136. PETITIONS

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

- Grant Licensed Taxi Drivers access to bus lanes across Rotherham (59 signatures – Lead Petitioner: Councillor Simon Ball)
- Improved Road Safety and School Crossing - Thorpe Hesley Primary School (117 signatures – Lead Petitioner: Katie Dawson)

Councillor Ball was unable to attend the meeting. Mrs Dawson attended the meeting and spoke to her petition. In accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment would provide a written response to each petition within 10 working days.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the relevant Executive Director be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Thursday 7 May 2026.

137. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

138. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were 4 questions:

1. Mr Ashraf - Can Council Leader Chris Read explain how Community Cohesion is served and the Equality Act followed, by him and other political speakers acquiescing to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's demand, selectively barring them from publicly condemning all Genocides including the live-streamed Genocide, recognised as such by the International Court of Justice and still continuing in Gaza and Palestine?

The Leader stated that Holocaust Memorial Day was first and foremost the designated day for remembering Jewish victims of the Holocaust. However, this did not mean that other genocides were not remembered. The Leader quoted the Chief Rabbi and said that honouring Jewish victims of genocide did not diminish compassion for others; it enlarged it because collective memory was not a finite resource. The lesson of the Holocaust was not that Jewish suffering mattered more, but that Jewish suffering mattered at all. When Jews were dehumanised and attacked, it was a sign that society was experiencing a fundamental moral malaise.

The Leader urged Mr Ashraf not to put the situation in Gaza into

competition with Jewish Holocaust. The Leader had condemned the tragedies in the Middle East and would continue to do so but it was unhelpful to put the two situations in conflict.

In his supplementary question, Mr Ashraf stated that the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust disagreed with what the Leader had said. He asked the Leader to commit to condemning all holocausts and genocides at any future public functions without equivocation. Mr Ashraf stated that he asked questions to advocate for a cause that he believed was righteous and to ask for the law to be applied equally to all without fear or favour.

The Leader stated that he and the Council condemned human rights violations whenever they happened. He reiterated that Holocaust Memorial Day was a particular day to remember a particular tragedy and a particular group of victims. It was vital to be conscious of the Jewish suffering during the Second World War which had shaped Europe subsequently. The Leader again condemned human rights violations in the Middle East.

2. Mr Cowles - As Leader of RMBC, what action did you take following the email sent to you on 25th July 2018 with the attachment labelled as:

D2 Evidenced dishonesty involving RMBC officers and commissioners (Part 1 30.6.17)

As Mr Cowles was unable to attend the meeting, a written response would be provided.

3. Mr Shepherd - What were the reasons for not distributing the 1400 copies of 'Voices of Despair, Voices of Hope' purchased at a cost of £5600?

As Mr Shepherd was unable to attend the meeting, a written response would be provided.

4. "T" - What action, if any, did you take as Leader of RMBC in response to this statement in Section 6 of the RMBC Briefing Note re D2 Evidenced dishonesty dated 16.12.20

"The council has never explained how the decision was reached to not distribute the publication Voices Of Despair, Voices Of Hope."

As T was unable to attend the meeting, a written response would be provided.

139. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

140. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader was pleased to say that the Council's Adult Social Care Services had been rated Good by the Care Quality Commission and was now the second joint top-scoring authority in the region. He thanked Councillor Baker-Rogers, the Executive Director Ian Spicer, the wider leadership team and officers within the Directorate for their hard and incredible work.

National Primary School Offer Day had been on 16 April 2026 and 98.5% of applications for reception entry in September were allocated one of their three preferences. For those moving from Year two to Year three, 100% of first preferences were satisfied. These were exceptionally high figures when compared to many places in the country.

In relation to major investments, the Leader reported that the new Tram stop at Magna was now open, as was the waterside restaurant at Rother Valley Country Park. The children's play areas at Thrybergh Country Park and Rosehill Park had been completed. Public realm worked had commenced in Swinton. The Leader also stated that Rotherham Theatres had been awarded £200,000 in government arts funding.

Finally, the Leader reported on the St George's Day event in Clifton Park that had taken place on Saturday 18 April. He believed that it had been a great event that brought communities and people together. Whilst flags had been used in recent months to divide and scare, the event in Clifton Park united people of all backgrounds, religions and beliefs with that same symbol.

The Leader of the Majority Opposition Group, Councillor Z. Collingham, was invited to respond. He congratulated all those involved in achieving the Good rating for Adult Social Care and asked if Outstanding was achievable. He also praised the work in relation to the Royal Mail Land Swap and Corporation Street developments. However Councillor Collingham asked if the recent progress would mean that a greater focus could be applied to the old bank and to the Regal Cinema.

Councillor Collingham referenced the Street Safe Team who had been met with some criticism in Dinnington as it was felt by some that they were ineffective in tackling crime and antisocial behaviour. Councillor Collingham stated that this concerns had been foreseen and asked if the Leader had any further feedback and impact data regarding the Street Safe Team that demonstrated they were actually working and achieving their aims and objectives.

Councillor Collingham referenced the upcoming elections in Barnsley and Sheffield and asked if the Leader would promise to be ruthlessly pragmatic in channelling regional attention to Rotherham following the impact of what could be sizable change in the region in relation to politics

and personalities.

Finally, Councillor Collingham stated that there had been reports that the Prime Minister had misled Parliament, that inquiries were needed and that the Leader of the country did not know what was happening on his watch in his government. When this last happened, the Leader and Labour Group had been very vocal in calling for the resignation of the Conservative Prime Minister. He asked if the Leader still thought the same.

The Leader was invited to respond to Councillor Z. Collingham. He stated that achieving Outstanding was the next step, but it would take a lot of time and work. In relation to the old bank and Regal Cinema, the Leader confirmed that their remained challenges with those projects and he did not want those challenges to delay the other redevelopment work that could be undertaken.

The Leader did not have any further data relating to the Street Safe Team in the meeting but would provide the latest information from the service outside of the meeting. However, he did state that positive comments had been made about the Street Safe Team from business owners in Swinton. In relation to Dinnington, the Leader stated that there were serious issues to address that could not be fixed by the Street Safe Team. It would take the Police, Neighbourhood Coordinators and Local Community Protections Teams to tackle those issues related to Anti-Social Behaviour. The Leader stated that he had not been asked to be directly involved in these issues but that could be requested.

In relation to the upcoming elections, the Leader confirmed that he would work with all parties across South Yorkshire for the benefit of Rotherham and the wider region.

The Leader declined to give a running commentary on the Prime Minister and Peter Mandelson situation as it seemed to change hourly. The Leader stated that he wanted a Prime Minister who would deliver for local communities, put money back into public services and be on the side of people who needed an active government in place, and as such, he wanted a Labour Prime Minister, whoever that person might be.

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

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that he did not share their Leader's view on the St. George's Day event. He did not believe that the genuine concerns expressed by those who were being exploited by the far right had been addressed.

The Leader stated that audience research had been undertaken as part of the event so that would be analysed. It was never the intention of the event to specifically appeal to those who had been conned by the far right and take them on a journey. It was about bringing people together so that

they could be comfortable around different people. It was hoped that the event had reached different communities, particularly more white, low income communities that would not usually attend Council run events.

Councillor C. Carter asked if the café at Rother Valley Country Park would be appropriately staffed as she had visited the café at Thrybergh Country Park and it had been poorly run due to staffing level. She asked if assurances could be provided.

The Leader stated that he was confident that the café's would be appropriately staffed as further staff had now been recruited at Thrybergh. He confirmed that a written response would be provided setting out further information on this.

Councillor Bacon stated that the Leader should not need to be asked to get involved in solutions for major antisocial behaviour issues. He should just do it. With regard to regeneration, Councillor Bacon stated that the paving had not been cleaned, and he asked if the Leader would work with organisation's such as Historic England and look at further funding for planning enforcement to change the way high streets across the borough looked, with a particular focus on signage.

The Leader stated that he would be happy to let Councillor Bacon's residents know that Councillor Bacon was unable to sort the anti-social behaviour out in his ward.

Councillor Currie stated that the Children's Capital of Culture initiative had been fantastic but, since it had now finished, he asked if the outdated signage could be taken down.

The Leader confirmed that it would be taken down.

Councillor Reynolds referenced the Street Safe Team and stated that some people did not want to be helped. He asked if warm places could be provided in the winter for homeless people He also stated that the Team were the best placed people to advise on what needed to be delivered.

The Leader confirmed that emergency shelter was available during adverse weather. He also confirmed that the Homelessness Team included people who had lived experience of homelessness themselves.

141. NOMINATIONS - MAYOR-ELECT AND DEPUTY MAYOR-ELECT FOR THE 2026-27 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Nominations had been invited for the positions of Mayor-Elect and Deputy Mayor-Elect for the 2026-27 Municipal Year.

One nomination for the position of Mayor had been received:

That Councillor Rashid be elected Mayor of Rotherham for the 2026-27

Municipal Year.

Proposer: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Ahmed

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

Councillor Rashid was appointed Mayor-Elect for the 2026-27 Municipal Year. His election as Mayor would take place at the Annual Meeting on 15 May 2026.

There had been three nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor-Elect as set out in the Mayors Letter:

That Councillor Currie be elected Deputy Mayor of Rotherham for the 2026-27 Municipal Year.

Mover: Councillor Ryalls

Seconder: Councillor Bennett-Sylvester

With the agreement of Councillor Ryalls and Councillor Bennett-Sylvester, Councillor Currie requested that his nomination be withdrawn as he wished to support the nomination for Councillor Brent. This request was accepted by the Mayor.

As such, two nominations were moved and seconded during the meeting as follows:

That Councillor Brent be elected Deputy Mayor of Rotherham for the 2026-27 Municipal Year.

Mover: Councillor Steele

Seconder: Councillor Williams

That Councillor Tinsley BEM be elected Deputy Mayor of Rotherham for the 2026-27 Municipal Year.

Mover: Councillor Z. Collingham

Seconder: Councillor Yasseen

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

The Conservative Group / Independent Member nomination for Councillor Tinsley was lost.

The Labour Group nomination for Councillor Brent was carried.

Councillor Brent was appointed Deputy Mayor-Elect for the 2026-27 Municipal Year. His election as Deputy Mayor would take place at the Annual Meeting on 15 May 2026.

142. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this report provided an update to Council on 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). The updated work programmes for each were attached as appendices.

Councillor Steele, in moving the report, thanked all Members and Officers involved in Scrutiny. Since the last Council meeting, the following had been undertaken, with further detail set out in the report:

- 9 formal committee meetings held across all commissions.
- 18 substantive items considered across all commissions, excluding the pre-decision work.
- 14 opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny.
- 2 Q&A Sessions held (Leader of the Council and Mayor of SYMCA) which enhanced transparency, political accountability and understanding of strategic priorities beyond the authority.
- 2 workshops (Rotherham Parent Carers Forum Update and PAUSE Project).
- 4 site visits were held (Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) Centre, Joint Lung Clinic, Market / Library Redevelopment, Rotherham Parent Carers Forum).

Councillor Bacon, in seconding the report, also thanked Members and Officers for their work.

Councillor Currie requested that provision of litter bins be included on the Scrutiny Work Programme. Councillor Steele agreed to look into the matter.

Resolved:

That Council receive the report and note the updates.

Mover: Councillor Steele

Seconder: Councillor Bacon

143. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR GREASBROUGH

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Greasbrough 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 Beresford firstly thanked her ward colleague, Councillor Elliott,

and the Neighbourhood Team and Area Housing Officers. She then highlighted various aspects of the report which addressed the Ward Priorities. In relation to road safety and traffic, bollards and a vehicle activated sign had been installed. A 20mph zone had also been implemented. In relation to crime, a Bleed Kit had been installed in Greasbrough Park which had been funded by Ward Councillors. Many events had taken place to bring the community together, including VJ Day celebrations and Remembrance Sunday. Conversations were ongoing with Rockingham School to explore the potential installation of play equipment in the local area. The final Ward Priority was to improve the environment. Greasbrough Park had been awarded Green Flag status for the sixth year. It was the only park in the borough not managed by the Council to have received this status. A skip day had also been organised.

Councillor Elliott also wished to thank the Neighbourhoods Team, particularly Shaun, Nic and Sarah who had provided invaluable support. He also thanked the area Housing Officers, Janet, Diane, Pam and Eeram and the local Police team, Andy, Paul, Jackie, Ella, Emily and Abby along with the waste management team, Lee and Chloe. Finally, Councillor Elliott thanked Super Brian who was one of the estate caretakers who also went the extra mile.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

144. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR HELLABY AND MALTBY WEST

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Hellaby and Maltby West 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 Ball was unable to attend the meeting.

Councillor Stables stated that the focus for her and Councillor Ball had been to listen to residents and deliver real visible improvements. They had organised the first Community Christmas Tree and St. George's Day event for Hellaby and Maltby West. Work had been undertaken alongside council services, police and local groups to improve local outdoor spaces. This had included walkabouts, planting projects and a street signage initiative involving local school children. Residents had been supported with projects like Dementia Friendly Sessions, Adult Learning at Maltby Library and activities for children in the school holidays.

Councillor Stables spoke about addressing concerns relating to personal safety and home security. Events and initiatives had been held to bring people together and strengthen the community identity. This included Halloween and Christmas events and an Alzheimer's Festival. Councillor

Stables thanked the Maltby Community Hub and Flux Rotherham for their support along with the neighbourhoods team. She confirmed that all their ward budget was spent.

Councillor Tinsley seconded the report.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

145. NOTICE OF MOTION - FIRST CITIZEN - STRENGTHENING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN CIVIC LEADERSHIP

It was moved by Councillor Yasseen and seconded by Councillor Bower that:

This Council notes that:

1. The offices of Mayor and Deputy Mayor are civic roles, constitutionally intended to be non-political civic roles, with those appointed the 'First Citizens' of the borough. In this capacity, they are expected to represent the whole Council and all Rotherham residents, reflecting the whole borough rather than any individual political group.
2. National civic guidance and established local government practice expect holders of these offices to act in a fair, impartial and non-partisan manner while undertaking their duties.
3. The Council's Constitution provides for an open nomination and annual election process, but does not prescribe how political groups or non-aligned members should approach these appointments.
4. In practice, the absence of any agreed cross-party and non-aligned members convention or protocol means that the outcome of Mayor and Deputy Mayoral nominations is determined by the majority political group through its voting majority.
5. This has created a disconnect between:
 - the stated expectation of political neutrality, and
 - the perception that the 'First Citizen' role is controlled through party-political majority.
6. A number of local authorities have addressed this tension through agreed cross-party arrangements, including provision for non-aligned members
 - rotation systems between political groups (e.g. Worcester City Council)
 - proportional or agreed sharing arrangements (e.g. Bury Metropolitan Borough Council)

- or cross-party civic pairings in practice (e.g. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council).
7. These approaches strengthen public confidence by ensuring that the office of 'First Citizen' visibly reflects Rotherham and the whole Council, rather than any single political group or non-aligned member.

This Council believes that:

1. Civic roles must not only be politically neutral in function but also be seen to be neutral in how they are allocated.
2. Reliance solely on majority voting, without any balancing convention, risks:
 - undermining the perceived independence of the 'First Citizen' role,
 - reducing a civic office to a political outcome, and
 - weakening public confidence in the integrity of our civic institutions
3. Ensuring fairness in civic appointments is not about advantage for any group, but about upholding the dignity, integrity and credibility of the office itself.
4. An inclusive approach to the Mayoralty and Deputy Mayoralty would:
 - better reflect the diversity of representation within the chamber,
 - demonstrate institutional maturity, and
 - align this Council with recognised good practice across local government.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Request the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with Group Leaders and non-aligned members, to develop and present options for a formal cross-party protocol, inclusive of non-aligned members governing the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
2. Ensure that these options include:
 - a rotation model between political groups and non-aligned members
 - a proportional or agreed allocation framework and
 - a presumption against continuous control of the Deputy Mayoralty by one political group without cross-party agreement.
3. Require that proposals explicitly consider examples of good practice from other councils and inclusive approaches to civic appointments,

including Worcester City Council and Bury Metropolitan Borough Council.

4. Receive a report with recommendations ahead of the next Annual Council meeting, with a view to either:
 - adopting a formal protocol, or
 - incorporating agreed arrangements into the Constitution.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19(2), a recorded vote was requested and taken for this item as follows:

For: Councillors Bacon, Blackham, Bower, A. Carter, C. Carter, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Currie, Elliott, Fisher, Harrison, Havard, Hussain, Jones, Reynolds, Ryalls, Stables, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Against: Councillors Adair, Ahmed, Alam, Allen, Baker-Rogers, Bennett-Sylvester, Beresford, Brent, Clarke, Cowen, Cusworth, Duncan, Garnett, Harper, Hughes, Ismail, Jackson, Keenan, Marshall, McKiernan, Monk, Rashid, Read, Sheppard, Steele, Sutton, Taylor and Williams.

Abstain: Councillors Beck and Lelliott.

The motion fell.

146. NOTICE OF MOTION - LIGHTING COLUMNS - CUT UNNECESSARY RED TAPE SO THAT OUR STREETS CAN HAVE FLORAL DISPLAYS, CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS, POPPIES, AND CCTV

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

The original Motion was moved by Councillor A Carter and seconded by Councillor C Carter. The amendment was moved by Councillor Z Collingham and seconded by Councillor T Collingham.

The substantive motion was therefore:

This Council notes that:

- The use of hanging baskets, seasonal displays of poppies around Remembrance Sunday, festive decorations, and community-installed features contributes significantly to civic pride, local identity, and the visual appeal of Rotherham's towns and villages.
- Such initiatives are often supported and delivered in partnership with parish councils, community groups, and volunteers, demonstrating strong local engagement and ownership.

- The installation of CCTV and associated infrastructure on street lighting columns plays an important role in promoting public safety and deterring crime.
- Street lighting columns provide a practical and efficient means of hosting these enhancements throughout the year.

This Council further notes that:

- Current requirements for structural assessments of street lighting columns, including the associated costs, are increasingly being passed on to external organisations such as parish councils and community groups.
- These costs and administrative burdens risk discouraging or preventing local initiatives, placing valued community-led enhancements under threat.
- Smaller parish councils and voluntary groups may lack the financial capacity to meet these requirements, leading to inequality in the ability of communities to participate.

This Council believes that:

- The benefits of these installations to community wellbeing, safety, and local pride outweigh the current bureaucratic and financial barriers.
- A more proportionate and supportive approach is needed to ensure that community groups are not disincentivised from contributing to the borough's environment.
- Residents of Rotherham want Rotherham Council to be facilitating these displays wherever possible.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Request that the Cabinet review the current policy regarding structural assessments for attachments to street lighting columns, with particular regard to:
 - The financial burden placed on parish councils and community organisations;
 - Opportunities for the Council to provide support, guidance, or funding assistance;
 - The development of a proportionate, risk-based approach to assessments.

2. Request that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board consider adding this issue to its future work programme, in order to:
 - Examine the impact of current policies on community participation;
 - Explore best practice from other local authorities;
 - Make recommendations to ensure a fair, sustainable, and enabling framework.
3. Reaffirm its support for community-led initiatives that enhance the borough's streetscape, improve safety, and foster civic pride.

[Insert]

4. ***Request that the Cabinet Member responsible for parish liaison liaise with parish councils to identify any need for short term transitional support to preserve community events and initiatives this financial year.***

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

147. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 19 January, 9 February and 16 March 2026.

Resolved:

That the report, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 19 January, 9 February and 16 March 2026 be received.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

148. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:

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

Mover: Councillor Allen

Seconder: Councillor McKiernan

149. 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 Second: Councillor Cusworth

150. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE**Resolved:**

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

Mover: Councillor Garnett Second: Councillor Steele

151. PLANNING BOARD**Resolved:**

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

Mover: Councillor Jackson Second: Councillor Ahmed

152. STAFFING COMMITTEE**Resolved:**

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

Mover: Councillor Alam Second: Councillor Read

153. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**Resolved:**

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

Mover: Councillor Clarke Second: Councillor Lelliott

154. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were no questions to consider.

155. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 10 questions:

1. Councillor Currie: Please could you tell me why each ward has a set amount of litter bins that can be allocated but still ask the general public on the online form if they desire more ?

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, Councillor Marshall, stated that she completely understood the concern around the expectations around new bins. She offered assurances that all bin requests, whether submitted online by residents or raised by councillors were assessed in the same way. A site survey was carried out for each location, and decisions made based on usage, safety, littering levels, and the overall number of bins.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Currie asked how many litter bins were allocated to each ward and how they could be allocated more?

Councillor Marshall confirmed that a written response would be provided.

2. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What information do we have regards the number of ASB incidents and neighbour disputes arising from parking disputes on RMBC housing managed estates?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that when the service logged an ASB case, it was categorised according to the issue reported. The NEC Housing Management System used a range of categories, including vehicle related nuisance. There was no separate category for parking disputes. However, in the 25/26 financial year there were 49 cases reported in the Anti-Social Behaviour category for vehicle related nuisance. It was not known if these related to parking disputes.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that parking issues could lead to bigger disputes. He asked if the Cabinet Member would recognise that parking issues could cause problems, disputes and tensions with neighbours and he asked whether it should be looked in to.

Councillor Beresford agreed that parking issues could cause disputes to escalate, as could untidy gardens or barking dogs. She stated that the service would continue to look at Anti-Social Behaviour issues on the estates.

3. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What information do we hold regards prospective tenants of RMBC housing declining properties or not

bidding on properties due to inadequate parking?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that from 01/04/2025 to 31/03/2026 there were 3 property refusals due to no car parking. The Council did not hold information relating to applicants who chose not to bid for properties due to parking considerations. Reasons for not bidding under the choice based lettings scheme were not captured or recorded within the system.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if the Housing Service could look at how long it took to let properties on older estates that had limited parking and how many bids went in for them. He was concerned that older estates would be left behind.

Councillor Beresford confirmed that she would look in to it. However she stated that nearly all properties were very quick to let due to the demand.

4. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: When assessing the condition of our RMBC housing estates what assessments have been made of the blighting impact of limited parking on grass verges and green spaces on our estates?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that all new Council Housing developments and acquisitions took account of parking demands according to planning guidance and permissions. Access to public transport was a factor in considering planning applications for new housing and could inform the amount of car parking provision required for a particular scheme, within national and local policy guidelines. Location specific estate parking and vehicular access needs were assessed on a case by case basis, looking at risk and feasibility.

To manage the substantial increase in car ownership since many of the housing estates were constructed, recognising that this had resulted in vehicles parking on grass verges, open spaces and edges of pavements, preventative measures were being employed, such as the installation of verge bollards, to protect green spaces. Where it had been able to do so, the Housing Service had also undertaken parking projects to improve parking availability.

In some locations, parking had been installed on grass verges or elsewhere to increase parking capacity, prevent highway obstructions etc. This work had been funded from various budgets, such as Ward housing budgets and the Housing Capital Environmental Works Programme.

Appropriate enforcement action was taken where such issues arose and where it was reasonable to do so, given the pressures that existed. This included tenancy enforcement action. Issues regarding

verge parking and parking in communal areas such as green spaces, were dealt with by the area housing teams, in liaison with other services, such as Highways and South Yorkshire Police.

It was worth noting that the Council managed a significant number of garage sites across many housing estates, which provided a secure alternative to street parking.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that the damage from cars on grass verges demonstrated that support was needed from central government to bring estates up to date. Since there was no capital programme regarding this at the Council, he asked if the Cabinet Member could urge central government to look into funding for grass verge repairs and to bring older estates up to date.

Councillor Beresford confirmed that she would enquire about funding.

5. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: How many requests have been received by RMBC for alterations to properties due to the purchase of or supply of electric vehicles via the Motability scheme?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that the Housing Service had received 30 applications from tenants for permission to install EV charging points since May 2021. Only 1 of those applications specifically mentioned the Motability Scheme.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that some residents had been told it would be better to rehouse them than install EV chargers. There were also many residents who could not afford to install their own EV chargers.

He asked what plans were in place to prepare all houses on the estates for the move to electric vehicles, so that residents could park outside their house and get them charged accordingly?

Councillor Beresford confirmed that there were no plans in the short term to install EV Chargers at all Council estate homes. She stated that the Council would continue to administer requests on a case by case basis.

6. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can you please confirm if the ringfence around the housing revenue account means funding via the Pride in Place programme can or cannot be used to improve land owned by RMBC housing?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that the ringfence around the housing revenue account did not prevent Pride in Place programme funding being used to improve land owned by RMBC Housing.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked for confirmation that Pride In Place funding could be used to tackle blight on the Council estates that look a bit older.

Councillor Beresford stated that the Council did not decide where the Pride In Place funding was spent. That was for the Panel led by the Local MP to decide. However, if they did want to improve an area, and it was on Rotherham Council housing land, the Council would support it.

7. Councillor Yasseen: Despite overwhelming resident opposition in the consultation, the Council is proceeding with the Eastwood Lane cycle scheme. Can you explain how this decision reflects meaningful public engagement, what threshold of opposition would trigger reconsideration, and why alternative options or modifications have not been brought forward in response to clearly expressed community concerns about this proposal and its local impact?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, Councillor Williams, explained that the Council's approach was exactly meaningful public consultation. A decision had not yet been made either to proceed with the scheme, or to drop it.

The Council carefully considered the responses from the first round of consultation and had developed alternative options and modifications to the concept ideas consulted on previously, based on what residents said. A further consultation process was now commencing through which the results of this work would be shared: the proposal was now tighter, and the Council were keen to see what the views were from Rotherham's community.

When the consultation closed, the Council would consider all the responses and officers would draft a report on the findings. As part of that, an analysis of what this meant for the scheme going forward would be undertaken.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen asked if the Council would provide some evidential base about how the modal shift to cycling would happen and how CO2 emissions would reduce as a result of this scheme.

Councillor Williams stated that the infrastructure needed to be in place so residents could make informed choices about how they wanted to travel. He encouraged Councillor Yasseen and residents to get involved in the consultation.

8. Councillor Yasseen: The landlord I receive the most complaints about is the Council itself, particularly delays in engagement and action. Can you explain why the Council is not meeting the standards expected by

its tenants, what steps are being taken to improve response times and accountability, and how tenants can have confidence their concerns will be addressed promptly and fairly?

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, explained that, as the largest social landlord in the borough, and one of the largest stock holding authorities nationally, it was recognised that tenants expected a timely, reliable service from their landlord. The Council welcomed the feedback that helped improve services. Whilst service demand and complexity of need had increased, positive progress was being made following feedback from tenants. The most recent tenant satisfaction results highlighted strong core landlord responses, including tenants feeling safe in their home (81.5%), being treated fairly and with respect (83%), satisfaction with repairs and maintenance (78.9%), and being kept informed about matters that affect them (75.6%). These areas consistently scored higher than national comparators and reflected the professionalism of staff interactions, strong compliance arrangements, and improving communication.

The focus was now firmly on building a stronger service response, underpinned by clear service standards for contact, updates and escalation. These standards were embedded across housing services and supported by robust performance management and oversight, including routine monitoring of response times (which were now meeting or exceeding the Council's target), overdue actions and repeat contacts, with clear management escalation where standards were not met. A tenant-led 'Learning from Complaints Panel' had also recently been launched.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that the Council were not good at responding to residents in a timely manner. The smallest issue when on for months and it seemed that the Council was frightened of speaking to residents.

Councillor Beresford encouraged Councillor Yasseen to contact her directly if these issues continued.

9. Councillor Yasseen: Following the Government's recent announcement on council tax debt reform, including a 63-day grace period and mandatory repayment plans, can the Cabinet Member confirm when this Council intends to implement these changes, given national rollout is expected from April 2027, and whether our current policies already reflect this more supportive approach to residents in arrears?

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, Councillor Alam, explained that the change to the grace period before recovery action could commence, contained within the Government's response to the council tax administration consultation, would require changes

to council tax legislation.

These changes would, therefore, be implemented in line with the Government's intended timeline from April 2027. Current legislation provided for a 14 day period from an instalment being missed to an application for a liability order being made. A reminder notice could be issued as little as one day after an instalment had fallen due, if not paid, the full balance fell due 7 days later and an application for a liability order could be made 7 days from that date.

The Council's current process was to set a timetable for the year which ensured no action to recover debt was taken outside the timescale set in law. However, the actual number of days' grace varied depending on the allocation of court dates by Sheffield Magistrates Court and the date an instalment fell due.

Wherever possible the Council worked with debtors to agree a repayment plan which took into account the customer's financial position.

There was no supplementary question.

10. Councillor Yasseen: In light of recent concerns surrounding decisions taken by the Labour Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, including the Mandelson appointment, can the Leader of the Council clarify whether any representations have been made to Labour Government, and how they ensure residents' confidence is upheld when national decisions risk undermining public trust in leadership and accountability?

The Leader stated that the Council made representations to the government on a variety of topics at any given time. It had not made representations, to the best of the Leader's knowledge at least, either in regards to the appointment of ambassadors like Peter Manelson or in a broader question of accountability in the way that you've described it.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that Rotherham should be knowledgeable on this due to the historical response to CSE and its improvements journey and that this should be used to inform others on accountability and leadership. In that regard, she asked the Leader if he thought it reasonable to expect that knowingly associating or doing business with a well-known paedophile should have disqualified someone from being put forward for a diplomatic role.

The Leader had nothing further to add.

156. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.