

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 21 April 2026**

Present:- Councillor McKiernan (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Allen, Jackson, Mrs M. Jacques, Jones, Lelliott, Mault, Rashid, Sheppard, Stables, Thorp and Tinsley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adair, Beck and Taylor and Mrs Kay Bacon.

The following officers and partners were also in attendance:-

Councillor Lynda Marshall - Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces
Councillor John Williams - Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs & the Local Economy
Councillor Brian Steele – Chair of Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd
Andrew Bramidge - Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment
Polly Hamilton - Service Director, Culture, Sport & Tourism
Charlotte Evans - Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd
Jon Hinchliffe - Green Spaces Manager
Kevin Burke - Principal Officer, Creative Programming & Visitor Experience
Helen Sleight – Assistant Planning Policy Manager
Martin Hughes – Head of Neighbourhoods
Megan Hinchliff - Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager

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

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

57. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2026

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 March 2026 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 61 (Allotments Annual Update 2025) on the grounds that they held a Board Member position on the Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd and therefore would not ask any questions on this item or vote on any recommendations.

59. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

60. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that there were no items of business on the agenda

that would require the exclusion of the press or public from the meeting.

61. ALLOTMENTS ANNUAL UPDATE 2025

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces (Cabinet Member), introduced the item and welcomed Charlotte Evans from the Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd (RAA) and Councillor Steele, Chair of the RAA, to the meeting.

Councillor Steele explained the background to the RAA, a co-operative, non-profit organisation. The RAA was established as a limited company in 2020 and took over the management of council-owned allotments on behalf of the council from this date.

Councillor Steele reported that the RAA was still waiting to complete the lease arrangements associated with the transfer of allotment sites into long-term self-management by the RAA. This delay had been due to legal complexities but officers at the RAA and the council had been working with solicitors to try and resolve outstanding issues.

It was explained to Members that the RAA managed its own budget and expenditure and all administration associated with the letting of allotments was managed by Charlotte Evans. There were 10 directors on the Board of the RAA, two of which were specialist directors and two were RMBC councillors. The shareholders of the RAA were the allotments holders and £1 of their first rent payment entitled them to a share in the RAA and allowed them to attend and vote at the RAA's annual general meeting and other shareholders meetings.

Councillor Steele further explained that the RAA had two different types of allotments – those that were directly managed by the RAA and those which were managed under "Societies", which managed the allotments on the RAA's behalf. Each Society had a small committee, a Chair, a Secretary, a Treasurer and two other members and would manage the site and collect rents themselves. These Societies received a reduction in their rents to reflect the cost-saving to RAA in them managing these issues themselves.

Jon Hinchcliffe, Green Spaces Manager, reiterated to Members that the delays experienced in completing the lease were due to technical legal reasons rather than operational reasons, and assured Members that all sites continued to be effectively and safely managed by the RAA in the meantime. Whilst responsibility for management sat with the RAA, the council retained oversight and ongoing assurance through annual reporting and monthly meetings. Once the lease was finalised, the long-term self-management of allotments by the RAA across the borough would be fully embedded.

The Chair invited Members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the Allotment Annual Update 2025 and in the ensuing question and answer

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session the following points were raised:-

Councillor Allen referred to the difficulties in filling vacancies on the Board and asked how the RAA approached the recruitment of new directors. Councillor Steele responded that the allotment holders themselves generally came forward to sit on the Board. There were two spaces on the Board for members with more specialist knowledge, in areas such as Finance and Health & Safety. The Board had recently lost its Health & Safety specialist, but Councillor Sheppard had stepped up to take on this role temporarily until another Health & Safety specialist could be found. Councillor Steele stressed the importance of this role as the biggest health & safety issue in dealing with allotments was asbestos.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Allen asked whether the RAA had considered having a stall at the annual Housing Service Tenant Conference, which was usually held at the New York Stadium. Councillor Allen commented that a presence at this event could drum up more interest and awareness in the RAA and any vacancies on the Board.

Councillor Steele confirmed that the RAA always had a stall at the Rotherham Show, within the agricultural tent, and asked for representatives from the allotments to attend. The RAA also worked with the Neighbourhood teams in the northern areas of the borough where most of the allotments were – for example, Rawmarsh, Wath, Clifton Park, and Kimberworth.

In a further question, Councillor Allen asked for more information about the concerns referred to at page 53 of the Agenda Pack regarding the contract for routine grass-cutting with the council, and the outcome of recent discussions on this. Councillor Steele confirmed that some discussions had taken place with Jon Hinchliffe's team but that more discussions were needed to try and resolve the issues under the contract. These issues were largely that some fences had been damaged when grass and allotment hedges had been cut. This had led to complaints from the allotments about the damage caused. Fences were often needed for security and the damage would need to be rectified. There were also issues regarding overhanging trees but under the agreement with the council, the RAA was not allowed to trim or cut any trees without the council's permission.

Jon Hinchliffe provided a further update on the grounds maintenance contract with Neil Archer's team at the council. Neil Archer had been asked to attend future monthly meetings with the RAA and the council in order to try and resolve these issues.

The Chair enquired about the status of the Board vacancy to be filled by RMBC. Councillor Steele explained that this vacancy was referred to in the 2024 Annual Report and had now been filled by Councillor Sheppard. Councillor Marshall occupied a Board position as Cabinet Member and portfolio holder for Allotments, and Councillor Sheppard held the other

RMBC appointed Board position.

Co-optee Mrs M. Jacques, commented that the Tenant Conference which Councillor Allen had referred to was currently being planned and that details of the relevant contacts could be provided if the RAA wished to attend in future.

In a further question, Mrs M. Jacques asked who was responsible for any asbestos found on allotment sites. Jon Hinchliffe responded that the Grounds Maintenance teams would be responsible for safe removal of any asbestos. Councillor Steele further confirmed that where asbestos was found on any allotment site, the RAA would immediately contact specialist contractors to ensure that it was removed and disposed of safely. The RAA had a clear Asbestos Policy for health and safety compliance. Mrs M. Jacques asked whether the RAA would cover the cost of removal and Councillor Steele confirmed that the RAA would be responsible for the cost but had occasionally sought support and grants from the council to help with this.

Councillor Thorp asked why the spread of allotments that came under the RAA were largely in the north of the borough and why allotments in other areas such as Whiston, didn't come under the management of the RAA. Councillor Steele explained that some allotment holders wanted to manage themselves as a Society and that in these instances, the RAA would provide them with a set of standard Society rules to follow. If a Society came under the umbrella of the RAA, it would be expected that minutes of its Annual General Meeting and financial details were provided to the RAA for oversight. Societies would be responsible for their own sites and managing tenants but there was an appeals process for the allocation of allotments, and any disputes would be dealt with via the RAA.

The Chair asked for clarification on whether all allotments which came under the RAA and were covered by the Annual Reports were under council ownership. Councillor Steele confirmed that all allotments covered by the reports were ultimately owned by RMBC and overall oversight and management was undertaken by the RAA, but that the Societies also managed certain aspects of some allotments on the RAA's behalf.

Councillor Thorp asked who owned and was responsible for other allotments within the borough that were not covered by the RAA's report. Councillor Steele explained that when the RAA was set up, Parishes within the borough were allowed to retain control of allotments within their areas if they wished to. This had been the case in areas such as Maltby and Whiston. There were also some privately owned allotments within Rotherham.

The Chair asked if the RAA would be interested in taking on management of other allotment sites within the borough. Councillor Steele commented that it would depend on what state the allotments were in and confirmed

that the RAA were currently in discussions about taking over management of a site that had been within the Wentworth Estate, Sandymount allotments in Wath. Work needed to be carried out by the council first to put these allotments back to a standard that the RAA would be willing to take over.

Councillor Jones asked whether, given the high demand for allotment places in the area, consideration had been given to looking at bringing the other side of South Side allotments under the management of the RAA. Jon Hinchliffe responded that this could be looked at, depending on the level of work that would need to be carried out to bring the site up to standard.

The Chair thanked officers for their input and members for the questions asked.

Resolved:-

1. That the progress made toward the self-management of allotments in Rotherham, including progress on finalising the lease arrangements between the Council and the RAA be noted; and
2. That the progress made by the RAA during 2024 and 2025, as set out in the Annual Reports at Appendices 1 and 2 be noted.

62. SOUTH YORKSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces (Cabinet Member), introduced the item and explained that in 2021, the new Environment Act had introduced a statutory requirement for the preparation of local nature recovery strategies. South Yorkshire was one of 28 areas in England that had worked on producing a strategy, led by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA).

The Cabinet Member explained that the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Strategy) sought to identify existing valuable habitats, priority species, priorities for nature recovery and opportunities for enhancing biodiversity across the sub-region. The Strategy had been developed collaboratively with the four South Yorkshire local authorities and the Peak District National Park Planning Authority, alongside voluntary and public sector partners and would provide a strategic evidence base for nature recovery.

The Strategy would not place legal obligations on landowners but would inform planning, support funding bids, influence wider policy, and would help to attract public, voluntary and private sector investment into South Yorkshire's green environment.

Kevin Burke, Principal Officer - Creative Programming & Visitor

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Experience (Principal Officer) took Members through the update presentation, highlighting the following points:-

- The origin of the Strategy could be traced back to the 2015 Paris Agreement, where European and world countries agreed to aim for 30% of all land to be under positive management by 2030. The current level in South Yorkshire was reported to be around 15%.
- The Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had been leading on the introduction of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, with the aim of identifying locations to create or improve habitats and provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment.
- The Strategy was intended to be community-centred, with the aim of helping communities map out what actions they would need to take to enjoy and interact with their local environments fully.
- It was a statutory requirement for South Yorkshire to produce a Strategy and whilst there was no statutory requirement to implement it, the local planning authority would have to have regard to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy when preparing its next comprehensive local plan, and in taking decisions on planning applications once the Strategy had been approved. The Strategy would provide a basis to build upon. The Principal Officer explained that SYMCA had been working closely with the Planning and Green Spaces teams. Planning would be central to how the Strategy moved forward and there would be a need to consider the existing Local Plans that were already in place in order to try and align priorities.
- The Strategy would provide an opportunity to co-ordinate the response to bio-diversity loss across the South Yorkshire area. It would also encourage action through highlighting opportunities for targeting investment in wildlife creation and could help to guide private investment in nature and carbon markets.
- The Strategy would not provide the ability to force landowners or managers (including the council itself) to make changes to an identified piece of land, nor would it prevent land uses or grant permissions. The Strategy would provide non-binding guidance but could be viewed as an opportunities map for bio-diversity in the South Yorkshire area.
- It was explained that the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries globally. There were a number of areas across South Yorkshire that were islands of habitat that could be improved. One of the aims of the Strategy would be to try and connect those corridors to link the islands of habitat up.

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- Species abundance had declined by 19% on average, with 1 in 6 species in the UK threatened with extinction. The Strategy would provide a positive opportunity to pull people and organisations together to protect and increase wildlife populations and habitats.
- An example of recent work carried out in Rotherham in joining two ancient woodlands in Herringthorpe via the creation of a new meadow was provided. This kind of work would help to re-connect wildlife habitats. There were many local wildlife sites and areas of bio-diversity across the borough where small tweaks and improvements could be made to make a big difference to species habitats.
- As the Strategy covered the whole of South Yorkshire, it would provide opportunities to work with bordering local authorities to create soft boundaries for wildlife and nature. Detailed overview maps had been produced for Rotherham where each type of land and habitat had been identified and mapped. This would be very useful but some ground-truth work would need to be carried out to verify the accuracy of the maps.
- It was explained that the Strategy was due to be published in December 2026. The council had been provided with the latest draft (version 3) but the process of the constituent local authorities within South Yorkshire reviewing it had been slowed down by local elections in some areas. The next version of the Strategy (version 4) should be provided to local authorities imminently for their approval and then a period of public consultation on the Strategy would be launched over the summer months. Various events had been arranged for this consultation period. The draft Strategy for consultation would be presented to Cabinet in June 2026.
- The draft mission statement of the Strategy would be not to only restore thriving, connected natural habitats across South Yorkshire, but to create new ones and to reverse the decline of species and to do this urgently for people in South Yorkshire.
- The draft principles that underpinned the mission statement would be to:-
 1. Improve the quality and extent of habitats;
 2. Build climate resilience;
 3. Work in partnership;
 4. Value wildlife everywhere; and
 5. Connect people with nature.
- The different categories of habitats within the borough would be looked at to identify the issues affecting them. This would include areas of urban nature, which were often overlooked. There were

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many good examples in Rotherham of the development of areas of nature within the urban landscape, such as the current public realm works being carried out along the River Don in the town centre.

- The potential delivery mechanisms for the Strategy would be via the public and private sector, the Environment Agency, community groups and DEFRA, whose overarching vision would be to embed the Strategy into local decision-making, such as planning. This represented an opportunity for Rotherham to work with partners and local communities to identify what the Strategy could do for Rotherham. Overall governance and oversight on the Strategy would come from SYMCA, which had established a Steering Group to drive the Strategy forward.

The Chair invited Members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:-

Councillor Sheppard expressed his encouragement for the valuable work being done on the Strategy. With regard to engaging and reconnecting people with nature, Councillor Sheppard enquired whether engagement with local schools would form part of the Strategy, given that it would be young people who would be valuing and, hopefully, protecting nature in the decades ahead.

The Principal Officer responded that there were some pilot projects underway with local schools, such as at Winterhill School. However, the resource available within the Green Spaces team to deliver such community projects was limited and increased resource would be required to carry out more engagement work with schools. The Service Director for Culture, Tourism & Sport (Service Director) was looking into potential bids and grants that could support this kind of engagement work. The Principal Officer agreed, however, that youth involvement was vital to the success of the Strategy and that wherever communities asked for help or guidance, the council would do its best to provide it.

In a further question, Councillor Sheppard commented that there been a recent increase in the percentage of DEFRA money going towards natural flood management in the new funding settlement and asked whether any work had been done with Connected by Water, which had a South Yorkshire footprint. There could potentially be some overlap in the delivery of schemes which would benefit local nature and could open up potential funding sources. In response, the Principal Officer confirmed that service had been working with the Flooding team closely on two projects at Whiston and Laughton. This had highlighted simple things that could be incorporated into larger-scale infrastructure projects that were fantastic for bio-diversity and there was increased partnership working between internal council services on this.

Councillor Stables mentioned that as Councillor for Maltby,

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representations had been made for the planting of more trees in the Maltby area. Councillor Stables had encountered difficulties in finding any information on Maltby within the interactive map. The Chair confirmed that at the last SYMCA Overview & Scrutiny meeting, it had been explained that not all of the information had been incorporated into the interactive map but that it was hoped it would be completely accessible by the time the consultation draft of the Strategy was published.

The Principal Officer confirmed that the interactive map was not yet fully functional. The Principal Officer commented that Maltby is an area valuable with an underlying rock strata of magnesian limestone, which created rare habitats across part of the borough. The Maltby area presented a lot of opportunities under the Strategy and the Principal Officer offered to visit the area and conduct a walk around with local Councillors to talk through what could be proposed with regard to habitats in the area. Councillor Stables confirmed that they would be keen to arrange this visit.

Councillor Jones expressed their support for the aspirations of the Strategy and echoed the sentiments expressed by Councillor Sheppard that work with schools and young people was vital. However, Councillor Jones expressed concern for the lack of any enforcement powers within the Strategy and whether as an all-encompassing vision for nature recovery, all parties would genuinely buy into it or whether private landowners or companies would continue to oversee the destruction of natural habitats without fear of any consequences or sanction.

The Principal Officer commented that at a high-level, DEFRA and the Environment Agency had bought into the Strategy and it was hoped that communities and smaller local groups such as Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust would also support delivery of the Strategy and its aims, and would report any wrongdoing to the council. There was however, currently no legislation forcing local authorities to deliver on the aims of the Strategy and therefore no associated enforcement powers.

Helen Sleigh, Assistant Planning Policy Manager (Planning Officer), further commented that DEFRA oversaw the Environmental Land Management Scheme for the private sector. It was hoped that farming landowners would properly engage in the Strategy, but the buy-in from non-farming private landowners could be more questionable. The Planning Officer explained that when planning applications were received that related to rural areas, the habitat map would be consulted to determine how decisions should be made to maximise bio-diversity net gain. The thresholds for considering bio-diversity net gain were due to change in July 2026, with the smaller sites net gain thresholds being raised and changing to 0.2 of a hectare. This would represent a big change for the council as planning authority and also for developers. Bio-diversity net gain considerations should also guide how DEFRA awarded grants to landowners for their land management practices.

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In a supplementary comment, Councillor Jones shared the view that if there was no ability to prevent people, developers or companies from destroying existing habitats, there was a risk that the Strategy would be nothing more than an aspiration.

Councillor Thorp referred to the proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project at Whitestone Solar Farm, which if approved, could devastate large areas of wildlife habitat which would be difficult to replace. Councillor Thorp questioned whether if this project was approved, it would defeat the objectives of the Strategy.

The Principal Officer commented that there would continue to be examples where the preservation of nature and habitats had not been managed well. However, the Strategy did provide an opportunity not seen before with habitat loss, to quickly identify other areas and to try and to develop these and move on.

Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods reminded Members that they had the opportunity to consider and promote nature recovery as part of their ongoing ward priorities, and that some wards within the borough had already identified these issues on their list of priorities. Members were due to review their ward priorities in June 2026 and the Head of Neighbourhoods suggested that Members may wish to consider the discussions that had taken place at this meeting when reviewing these priorities.

In relation to the off-set of bio-diversity net gain, Councillor Tinsley asked what was being done to focus re-investment from companies/developers within South Yorkshire, to ensure that the local area felt the benefit? The Planning Officer explained that the way bio-diversity net gain worked was that more would have to be delivered to off-set the further away from the development itself. The council would first try and get the net gain delivered on-site (within Rotherham), but if that wasn't possible, it would be hoped that it could be delivered off-site within the South Yorkshire area or other neighbouring authorities with similar character areas, such as North-East Derbyshire and Bassetlaw. The aim would be to replace lost habitats with the same type of habitat.

The Planning Officer confirmed that there was currently only one established habitat bank within the Rotherham area and that the council was keen to establish further habitat banks within the borough, once resource and funding would allow. Some initial work looking at potential sites and reviewing local wildlife sites under council ownership had been started but needed to be progressed to the next step. Work on the Strategy had recently taken priority due to the tight timescales involved.

In response, Councillor Tinsley commented that it appeared that work to establish further habitat banks within the borough should be prioritised to ensure that Rotherham was not left behind when large scale developments came along and the net gain work was delivered in other

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areas outside of the borough, to the detriment of local wildlife. Councillor Tinsley asked that an additional recommendation to this effect be considered by IPSC.

Councillor Mault asked how the Strategy, as a SYMCA-led project, would link in with Local Plans across the South Yorkshire local authorities given the increased targets for housing developments that had also been placed on local authorities to deliver.

The Planning Officer confirmed that in the work of writing planning policies, local councils had been told to “have regard” to the Strategy and to try to embed it within their Local Plans. It was clear that the Strategy should inform Local Plans going forward and guide decision-making when considering developments on green-belt land.

In a follow up question, Councillor Mault asked whether communication and connections between the South Yorkshire local authorities were likely to improve over their individual Local Plans?

The Planning Officer responded that SYMCA would be working on a spatial development strategy, which would be a South Yorkshire-wide overarching development strategy. With regard to the current Strategy under consideration, the four local authorities, along with the Peak District National Park Authority, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and the local Wildlife Trusts had all been heavily involved and had collaborated in pulling the Strategy together. DEFRA would be providing funding to SYMCA for delivery of the Strategy but decisions on exactly how that funding would be spent would be taking place at Chief Executive-level across South Yorkshire.

The Service Director commented that they felt very positive about the future of work related to nature recovery in Rotherham, which had been supported excellently by the Principal Officer and the Planning Officer and their teams. The Service Director pointed out that it was important to remember some of the wider benefits of engaging with nature in an area like Rotherham, which has a greater volume of green space than the national average in England.

However, the challenge for Rotherham would be that there were fewer than average numbers of people engaging with this green space. Engagement with green spaces helped residents in supporting their mental and physical health and was proven to be important for child development. It also encouraged social interaction and community cohesion, which in turn would contribute to reduced loneliness. The Service Director commented that the green spaces within the borough represented a source of civic pride for residents in Rotherham.

The Service Director confirmed that work would be carried out to create a departmental officer group to ensure that colleagues that worked on the Strategy were supported by teams across the whole council. Service was

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also working closely with the Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, Connected by Nature and a range of other partners to try and secure funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support further bio-diversity and natural heritage work.

Councillor McKiernan commented that he was encouraged by the evidence of joined-up working across the council on nature recovery and the Strategy

Councillor Allen commented that whilst they appreciated that the work on the Strategy was entirely necessary and laudable, they remained concerned that it could be of little meaningful value without any powers or sanctions attached to it. Councillor Allen requested that IPSC consider writing to SYMCA and DEFRA to express Members' concern around the lack of any enforcement powers behind the Strategy.

Councillor Steele, as RMBC representative on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at SYMCA and as Overview & Scrutiny Management Board Chair, advised Members that once the consultation draft of the Strategy had been released, IPSC would be able to write a letter to SYMCA and DEFRA expressing their concerns. Councillor Steele agreed that the Strategy represented excellent opportunities but was lacking in any power.

The earlier proposed recommendation by Councillor Tinsley regarding the development of further habitat banks within the borough was also discussed. The Planning Officer explained that delivery of habitat banks would be within the remit of the council rather than SYMCA. The council would sell "bio-diversity units" to pay for the long-term creation of habitats and approval from Cabinet would be required to create further Council-owned habitat banks .

The Executive Director confirmed to Members that the Strategy was due to go to Cabinet in June, shortly after the Strategy would be released for public consultation. At this point, it would be possible for IPSC to make additional recommendations to Cabinet as part of the council's formal response to SYMCA under the consultation.

As a final comment, Councillor Allen suggested that, bearing in mind the Head of Neighbourhoods' point around setting ward priorities, a Member Briefing on the Strategy could be useful.

The Chair thanked officers for their input and members for the questions asked.

Resolved:-

1. That the contents of the presentation in relation to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy be noted;

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2. That the following matter be referred to the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board for presentation to Cabinet, on behalf of the Improving Places Select Commission, when Cabinet considers the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy in June:-
 - a) That, as part of the Council's wider work on bio-diversity net gain, it be requested that the Service give consideration to prioritising the development of additional habitat banks within the Borough, to ensure that these are established in advance of any large-scale infrastructure projects which could create an urgent requirement to compensate for habitat loss; and
3. That the Chair, on behalf of the Improving Places Select Commission, writes to both the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) expressing Members' concerns around the advisory nature of the Strategy and the absence of any associated enforcement powers.

63. UPDATE ON ROTHERHAM PRIDE IN PLACE PROGRAMME

At the Chair's invitation, the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs & the Local Economy, Councillor Williams (Cabinet Member), introduced the update presentation and reminded Members that Rotherham had been awarded two schemes under the government's Pride in Place programme – Rotherham Central and Maltby, both of which had been awarded £20 million of funding over the next 10 years. The Rotherham Central area covered the geography around the town centre and the surrounding built-up neighbourhoods and communities on the edge of the town centre.

The last update to IPSC in October 2025, had been brought just prior to the council submitting its regeneration plan for the Rotherham Central scheme to government. Councillor Williams confirmed that the regeneration plan had been endorsed and that the approach which the council had taken in carrying out significant engagement and consultation work with the voluntary and community sector had been held up as an example of best practice.

The next step for the Rotherham Central scheme would be to progress on defining exactly how the funding would be spent within the first investment period, working alongside the local MP, Sarah Champion. It was hoped that a Chair would shortly be appointed to the Neighbourhood Board, which would oversee the progress of that funding.

The second Pride in Place scheme in Maltby had been awarded by government in Autumn 2025. This scheme covered a much smaller geographical area but would receive the same level of funding of £20 million over 10 years. As one of Rotherham's principal towns, the Cabinet Member welcomed this extra investment and opportunity for the Maltby

area.

The Cabinet Member explained that the government guidance on the Pride in Place programme had changed over the last few months and that this had prompted internal review within the council with regard to the council's role as the "accountable body". As a result, it had been decided that it would be more appropriate for the leading service within the council to be the Neighbourhoods Team rather than the Regeneration & Environment Team.

Megan Hinchliff, the Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager, took Members through the update presentation, highlighting the following points:-

There would be a strong partnership approach and it was imperative that all elements worked together as one to successfully deliver the schemes under the programme:-

- The **Neighbourhood Board** would be responsible for co-producing the Pride in Place plan and delivering it in the interests of local people, to improve the physical and social infrastructure of their communities.
- The **local communities** would shape the priorities under the programme and hold the Neighbourhood Board and local authority to account.
- The **local MP** now held a larger role in supporting the Chair and the Neighbourhood Board to inform the work and engage the community it represented.
- The **local authority** would support the Neighbourhood Board to develop and deliver the plan and would act as the "**accountable body**" and ensure compliant, legal and effective use of the public funds granted under the scheme. The "accountable body" would act as the legal employer for staff and would contract with third parties, whilst supporting community-led delivery by the Neighbourhood Boards.

The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager reminded Members that there was a capital and revenue split within the £20 million funding allocated to each area. This split was welcome given that there would be revenue attached to this long-term funding programme. A grassroots approach would be taken to the decision-making process, and would be led by the Neighbourhood Board, who would consider how to best to spend the money to meet the priorities of local people.

Rotherham Central Scheme

Initial consultation on the Rotherham Central scheme had been completed in summer 2025. That consultation process had lasted for

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around two years, having started under the former Long-Term Plan for Towns initiative. Consultation data had been fed into the final submission of the plan for Rotherham Central to government in November 2025. The submitted plan set out the overarching and strategic approach and also provided high-level thematic information. The plan did not set out individual projects as this would be decided over the coming months by the Neighbourhood Board.

The plan had been approved by government, without any conditions, in March 2026. This reflected the quality of the work carried out in preparing the plan. The ongoing support for the council as the “accountable body” would now sit with Neighbourhoods team, led by Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods.

The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager explained that the Neighbourhood Board would be a brand-new board, rather than an evolution of the previous Town Board. It would bring together those with a deep connection to the local area and appointments to the board were being made in partnership with Sarah Champion, MP for Rotherham. The MP would have a place on the board and every board member would have an equal vote in deciding how the funding under the programme would be allocated.

The Neighbourhood Board positions had been advertised widely in March 2026, via the Rotherham Advertiser, social media, posters and community and voluntary organisations. It was reported that there had been a good response and a further information event for interested parties had been held on 9th April 2026 at the Town Hall. All of those who were considered for board positions were people who lived within the central Rotherham area, to ensure that the process would be fully resident-led. It was hoped that appointments to the board would be finalised shortly and details would then be published on the dedicated Pride in Place webpage on the council website.

[Pride in Place – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

It was explained that once the Neighbourhood Board had been established and a Chair was in place, the next step would be to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, and the Board would then be able to begin developing the project pipeline for the first four years of the programme. This process would involve a number of key meetings over the next few months, and the council would commence the recruitment of a number of permanent officers within the Neighbourhoods Team, to support delivery of projects.

Maltby Scheme

The Maltby scheme had been announced in Autumn 2025, and it was reported that a lot of good work had already commenced, although this scheme was not as advanced. The capital and revenue split of the £20 million funding was different to the Rotherham central scheme, in that the proportion of revenue was slightly higher at 37%.

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Establishment of the Neighbourhood Board for Maltby was progressing at pace, and interviews for board members had recently taken place with the local MP for Rother Valley, Jake Richards. Extensive consultation with the local community in Maltby would be carried out over the summer months. The feedback from this consultation would be fed into the design of the plan, led by the Maltby Neighbourhood Board. It was hoped that the draft plan for Maltby would be presented to Cabinet towards the end of 2026 and submitted to government for approval over the winter.

The Chair invited Members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the Update on Rotherham Pride in Place Programme and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:-

The Chair asked why the council had decided to move oversight of the Pride in Place programme to the Neighbourhoods Team. In response, Andrew Bramidge, Executive Director of Regeneration & Environment, explained that the new government guidance which had been issued in December 2025, had put the Pride in Place programme in the realm of community and neighbourhood development. There was a clear aspiration from government to see the Neighbourhood Boards evolve into community interest companies or similar self-governing, self-managing entities. As the type of interventions that were likely to come forward under the programme would be around community capacity building and community development, rather than straightforward regeneration projects, it was felt that the existing expertise that sat within the Neighbourhoods Team would be best equipped to oversee these projects.

The Head of Neighbourhoods further commented that the Neighbourhoods Team had experience in working across services and with partners to deliver projects. Given that the shift in government guidance, it made sense to move oversight to the Neighbourhoods Team and the Chief Executive of the council and the relevant Cabinet Members had agreed this approach.

The Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that an HR recruitment process was underway to appoint a Programme Manager and two Project Co-ordinators, and it was hoped that these positions would be filled by the summer. In the interim transition period, support would continue to be provided by the Regeneration & Environment team. The main point of contact with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government remained within the Regeneration & Environment team but any new interactions would be led by the Neighbourhood Team. Whilst the Neighbourhood Team would “host” staff, the whole council would be the “accountable body” and a range of services would potentially help to deliver the projects under the direction of the Neighbourhood Board.

Councillor Thorp asked whether the make-up of the Neighbourhood Boards had altered since the last update to IPSC, given the change in government guidance. Previously, parties such as the local police had

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been due to have a presence on the board. The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager confirmed that the approach was no longer to seek representatives from certain organisations and was more resident-led, with applications welcomed from anyone within the community with an interest.

Councillor Stables enquired whether the work on Pride in Place projects would take Neighbourhood Officers away from their existing roles and whether the new posts would be funded from the £20 million available under the schemes. The Head of Neighbourhoods explained that in the interim period until the new posts were filled, existing Neighbourhood Co-ordinators in the relevant areas were providing support to keep work progressing. However, once the new posts were filled, there would be separate Pride in Place Co-ordinators for the Rotherham Central and Maltby areas and these posts would be funded entirely from central government grants associated with the Pride in Place Programme.

Councillor Tinsley referred to the fact that projects were being planned for the first four years of the ten-year programme and asked whether funding for these first four years was “locked in” or could be subject to change by government? The Executive Director confirmed that the funding for the full ten years was committed by government. It had been decided to focus on an initial four-year plan of delivery as it would be difficult to foresee what projects would be appropriate in eight or nine years’ time. This would provide more flexibility over years 5-10 of the programme given that circumstances and community needs could change over this length of time.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Tinsley enquired whether the two separate schemes could work together and pool revenue to fund a similar need? The Executive Director commented that the monies provided under the programme had to be demonstrated to have been spent within the defined area. However, there could hypothetically be situations where an “economies of scale” approach would be sensible – for example if there was a similar project underway in both areas at the same time. The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager added that the Programme Manager post would be funded 50/50 from the two schemes.

Councillor Stables asked when the Neighbourhood Board members for Maltby would be confirmed? The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager confirmed that it was hoped the Neighbourhood Board for Maltby would be launched by the Chair in May 2026.

The Chair thanked officers for their input and members for the questions asked.

Resolved:-

1. That the contents of the presentation providing an update on progress and developments on the Pride in Place programme for

both the Rotherham Central and Maltby areas be noted.

64. IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - WORK PROGRAMME 2025 - 2026

The Chair introduced the Work Programme item and updated Members on the recent site visit to the new Waterfront café development at Rother Valley Country Park, which the Chair and Councillors Thorp and Taylor had attended. The Chair commented that Members had been very impressed by the development and were excited by what it offered to residents of the borough.

The Chair confirmed that discussions with officers on-site had led to some scrutiny questions being asked and Members had explored with officers, challenges that had been experienced with procurement and HR processes in the run up to the centre opening. The Chair had raised some of these issues at the April Overview & Scrutiny Management Board meeting and was looking into the procurement issue further.

Councillor Thorp echoed that the Waterfront Centre was an impressive addition to Rother Valley Country Park. Councillor Thorp mentioned a particular procurement difficulty shared by staff regarding the sourcing of supplies of fresh chicken. Councillor Thorp also stressed the importance of ensuring adequate staffing levels at the Waterfront café, as a recent experience at Thrybergh Country Park café had demonstrated that there were not enough staff at that location, to manage demand.

Councillor McKiernan mentioned that the Waterfront Café would have a Head Chef on-site and that Members had been told that if this worked out well, it was hoped that the Head Chef could work across other catering sites across the borough, such as Thrybergh.

The Governance Advisor drew Members' attention to the following other Work Programme updates:-

- **Neighbourhood Leadership Workshop 27 April 2026**
The Governance Advisor reminded Members that a workshop on the draft Neighbourhood Leadership Strategy was due to take place on Monday 27 April 2026 and asked Members to confirm attendance.
- **End of the Municipal Year 2025-26**
The Governance Advisor thanked Members for their support and input for the 2025-26 municipal year.
- **Next IPSC Meeting Tuesday 23rd June 2026 at 1.30pm**
The next IPSC meeting in June would be the first meeting of the new municipal year and the Governance Advisor confirmed that Members would receive the Work Programme for 2026-27 at that point for discussion and consideration.

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The Governance Advisor further advised Members that for the upcoming municipal year, pre-meetings would be introduced to enable IPSC Members to discuss potential questions and key lines of enquiry prior to the formal meetings. This had been requested by Councillor Steele (as overarching Scrutiny lead) and the Monitoring Officer to ensure consistency of practice across the different Scrutiny commissions. These meetings would take place via Teams and were likely to occur around 5pm on the Thursday evening before each Tuesday meeting. Invites would be sent out for these pre-meetings in due course.

The Governance Advisor explained to Members that the calendar invites for IPSC meetings would also be increased from 2 hours to 3 hours. It was hoped that the majority of meetings would be completed within 2 hours, but where there was a busy agenda, it was important to ensure that this amount of time was set aside by Members. This would hopefully avoid too many Members having to leave before the end of the meeting, which would risk the quoracy of the meeting.

Resolved:-

1. That the update on the Work Programme be received and noted; and
2. That the Governance Advisor be authorised to make any required changes to the work programme in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair and reporting any such changes back at the next meeting for endorsement.

65. URGENT BUSINESS

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