

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 11 March 2026

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Adair, Allen, Blackham, Brent, A. Carter, Keenan, McKiernan, Monk, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Baggaley.

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

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

113. MINUTES OF MEETING TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2026 OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 3 February 2026 be approved as a true record.

114. MINUTES OF MEETING WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026 OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 4 February 2026 be approved as a true record.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

116. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

No questions were received. The Chair explained in relation to the enquiry received last month from a member of the public, it was forwarded on to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. The Mayoral Combined Authority subsequently responded and requested that the individual contact them directly. The member of public had been informed of this requirement.

117. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no reasons to exclude the press or public.

118. BEST START PLAN 2026-2029

At the Chair's invitation the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, Councillor Cusworth, introduced the report which provided an overview of the Rotherham Best Start Local Plan for 2026–2029. The plan brought together existing early years support across Rotherham, outlined how it had been developed, and set out the key

steps required to achieve local ambitions.

It was noted that the Department for Education (DfE) had set a national target for 75% of children to reach a good level of development by 2028, supported by new data tools, funding, and expectations through the Best Start in Life and Plan for Change programmes. All councils were required to publish a Best Start Local Plan by March 2026.

Rotherham's approach was guided by early intervention, partnership working, and community-based support, aligning with the Council Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Children and Young People's Transformation Programme, and the Early Help Strategy. It was highlighted that Rotherham had already established an early year's education strategy ahead of national guidance.

To support development of the plan, a Best Start Summit was held on 1 December 2025, bringing together partners from health, education, early years, and community organisations. The summit reviewed local needs, heard from families, and generated ideas that shaped the plan's priorities.

The plan was framed around the four cornerstones of the Rotherham Charter of Co-production: welcome and care, value and include, communicate, and work in partnership. The full plan included detailed outcomes, milestones, and measures, with progress to be monitored through the Best Start and Beyond Steering Group and reported through the relevant governance structures.

The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality, Helen Sweaton noted that, under usual circumstances, the development of a plan of this nature would involve a full co-production process with families, parents, carers and, where appropriate, young children. However, the version presented was an initial plan, produced within a very short timeframe set by Central Government and the DfE.

To meet the publication deadline of the end of March, stakeholders were brought together at a summit held in December 2025. Attendance included representatives from the 0-19 service, public health, early years education, academies, education inclusion, commissioning, family help, early help, social care, the voluntary sector, the Parent Carer Forum, and partners involved in culture, sport, libraries, and the Children's Capital of Culture programme. These participants were selected based on their experience and their ability to contribute meaningfully to identifying current activity and future opportunities.

The summit considered a comprehensive needs analysis, prepared by public health, drawing on both national data and local intelligence. From this, and in line with government expectations, key priorities were identified to strengthen Rotherham's approach and support improved outcomes in early years development.

It was noted that the Council had raised concerns with the DfE regarding the national target set for Rotherham, as the formula used did not sufficiently reflect local context, including levels of disadvantage and the higher-than-average proportion of children with special educational needs. While many children with SEND do achieve a good level of development, some did not meet the benchmark at the age of five, when the national measure was taken. Despite these concerns, the DfE confirmed that local performance would be judged against the national formula-based target.

The plan therefore focused on maximising available and anticipated resources to ensure that as many children as possible achieved a good level of development.

The Chair noted that the matter had been discussed at the Improving Lives Select Commission Chairs' quarterly meeting, where it was agreed that scrutiny of the developing action plan, including key activities and KPIs, would be helpful during the first six months. The Commission aimed to demonstrate progress by year-end, and the item has been added to the Improving Lives work programme for around September. The report was presented at this meeting because it was scheduled for Cabinet on Monday 16 March 2026 and could not be considered by the Improving Lives Select Commission within that timescale.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries.

It was explained that, when reviewing reports, Councillor Brent liked to summarise them into three key words beginning with the same letter. After reading the report and appendices, he identified "home, health and happiness" (with 'happiness' used to reflect well-being). Councillor Brent noted that while the report referenced well-being, health and home learning programmes, it did not address the home environments in which these programmes take place, which can be challenging for some children. Councillor Brent asked what could be done to consider this, given the focus on ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Helen Sweaton, Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality reported extensive ongoing work to identify children living in unsuitable home environments, beyond the home-learning programmes referenced in the strategy. This included joint work with Housing to ensure appropriate accommodation for children in the borough, and work with Health, Early Help, Family Help and Social Care to raise awareness of issues such as damp, mould, and available support.

Practitioners continued to monitor factors such as household functioning, parental relationships, sibling dynamics, signs of early neglect, and the general upkeep of the home. Rotherham had maintained a strong Early Help offer, supported by robust universal visits undertaken by the 0–19 service, with high completion rates within required timeframes. Practitioners knew how to access support when concerns were identified.

As children grew and transitioned through different settings, close work with early years providers and schools ensured that any emerging concerns about home environments were regularly identified. Not all ongoing activity was included in the plan, as the focus was on the key elements requested, including the home learning environment. The service confirmed that all commitments within the Family Help strategy continued to be delivered.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children & Young People noted that the use of the term plan, rather than strategy, had been a deliberate decision to support pace and visible progress. It was confirmed that the plan was designed to align closely with existing strategies.

In relation to the Best Start Family Hubs, early identification remained a priority. Work continued to register families, ensure engagement with hub services, and provide outreach support in the home, creating opportunities to identify issues as early as possible. The standalone Early Years Education Strategy also aimed to ensure early identification of additional needs, family help requirements, or social care concerns. Together, these approaches were designed to interlink effectively with wider strategies, providing an additional layer of assurance.

Councillor Monk thanked officers for the comprehensive report and noted the early identification of a significant gender gap within the needs assessment. Further information was requested on what was known about the causes of this gap, and how the plan would specifically target boys, given that boys did not appear to be represented within the other priority groups identified. Councillor Monk requested more detail on how this issue would be addressed within the plan.

The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality explained that the underperformance of boys in this assessment reflected a national pattern, and that Rotherham boys were not atypical. Nationally, boys tended to score lower in early years assessments, though the gap often shifted as children moved into secondary education.

She confirmed that, despite this wider trend, the service intended to target boys specifically to improve good-level-of-development outcomes and meet local targets. While the core work would not differ significantly, certain aspects required emphasis. Some areas of the assessment relied on children remaining seated and focused for extended periods, an element boys typically found more challenging, whereas they often performed better in physical activities.

The awareness campaign, including joint work with libraries, would place a particular focus on encouraging reading with boys. Early Years Inclusion and School Improvement services were also working with assessors to ensure teaching approaches and assessment methods reflected boys' strengths and supported their progress. The approach would therefore

include targeted actions, recognising this as an area requiring specific attention to achieve parity with girls.

Councillor Yasseen built on Councillor Monk's comments regarding the disadvantage experienced by boys, particularly working-class boys on free school meals, in their development. She welcomed the ambition of the work but was not fully convinced by how it was being presented, acknowledging that government deadlines had contributed to it being rushed.

Councillor Yasseen reiterated ongoing concerns about how equality impact assessments were being completed, stating that by 2026 the approach must improve. She noted that the assessment in this report repeated information from the main body rather than demonstrating how equality considerations had shaped the proposal from the outset. She emphasised that meeting equality duties was mandatory, not optional, and that this was not evident in the report.

Councillor Yasseen highlighted two key gaps. First, despite the report stating there was no ethnicity data, national census and Department for Education data were publicly available and should have been used. Second, she noted that the attainment gap for boys was even wider in Rotherham than nationally. She also raised that the Roma community in Rotherham was around five times larger than the national average, with significantly low Good Level of Development (GLD) scores (around 35%), which were lower than those of boys on free school meals. She stressed that a targeted approach, referenced in the report, could only be effective if informed by accurate equalities data. She asked why the equality information had been omitted and how the forthcoming delivery plan would ensure equality considerations were fully embedded.

The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality noted the points raised and agreed to take them on board for future reports. They explained that, at the time the plan was drafted and the summit was held, the detailed analysis now available had not yet been completed. They confirmed that a comprehensive family help needs analysis had since been developed, covering all children and young people up to age 25.

This analysis included specific data on communities, families and engagement levels down to postcode level, including service engagement and achievement. It had identified clear target areas for focus, including boys on free school meals, the Roma community, and several smaller communities within the borough.

It was confirmed that this needs analysis would inform the targeting of interventions within the programme to increase engagement and improve children's chances of achieving a good level of development. It was acknowledged the point raised regarding the equality impact assessment.

Councillor Yasseen reiterated their support for the ambition of the

programme and proposed a recommendation. She noted previous work, alongside Councillor Currie, in leading a motion that resulted in the council coordinating interventions on poverty, leading to the *No Families Left Behind* initiative.

She stated she were strongly invested in this issue and believed that, due to the targeted nature of the interventions and the variation across the borough, progress should be monitored at neighbourhood level. Given the three-year timeframe, she felt closer oversight was needed to ensure the right people were being reached and that the work was making a measurable difference. She emphasised the significance of the policy for the council.

Councillor Blackham raised concerns that nurseries were not referenced in the report, noting their crucial role alongside schools in children's early interactions. He emphasised the importance of ensuring nurseries were included in the work.

He highlighted the ambitious target of an 8.3% improvement over three years. He also expressed concern about wording in section 2.4.6, noting that while supporting the most disadvantaged children was important, resources should not be focused so narrowly that the majority were overlooked. He suggested that small improvements across the wider population could also make a significant contribution to achieving the overall target.

Councillor Cusworth confirmed that nurseries played a significant role in the work, as early years education for under-five-year-olds takes place in nurseries and childcare settings. She agreed to take the point back and consider referring to these collectively as "educational settings."

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children & Young People went on to say that the initiative and the Best Start Plan focused on targeting support and improving good levels of development. She explained that work was already underway across the borough to improve children's attainment, but there remained clear gaps between girls and boys, children on free school meals and those who were not, and between girls and boys receiving free school meals. She noted that Rotherham had already been addressing these issues, and the additional funding would help extend that work.

She highlighted that the early years education strategy had been in place for around two years, ahead of recent guidance for councils to introduce such strategies. This had already helped identify and target support for vulnerable children. She acknowledged comments about the wording referring to schools rather than nurseries, although all early year's settings were included.

Drawing on her experience as a qualified teaching assistant, she noted that assessment of development often reflected school environments that

historically suited girls more than boys and had changed little over the past century. She concluded that this was a government initiative and a statutory duty, which was why the report reflected that focus.

In the report and plan, the Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality explained they chose to use the terms *early years settings* or *early years provision* rather than specifying nurseries, private nurseries, or childminders.

This was based on feedback from the sector, particularly from childminders and nurseries that only support children under two, who felt excluded when it referred only to nurseries. However, it was accepted that the wider public may not understand what an early year's setting was, so the Council may need to reconsider that terminology, as it used more familiar terms in previous plans.

Regarding targeting, a significant amount of activity was already taking place, and much of what the Council planned focused on children already accessing provision. By provision, the Council meant not only nurseries, childminders, and schools but also libraries, voluntary-sector groups, and private groups operating across the borough. Much of this provision already supported the majority of children, whose parents and carers were able to access it. Improving the quality of this provision would further support children's development.

One reason the Council asked Debbie from Grimm to attend its summit was to understand what was already being delivered. It recognised that some families were less likely to access those opportunities, and the intention in targeting engagement activity was to ensure that those families were also able to benefit and that it helped level the playing field.

In response Councillor Blackham explained his concern was that the report focused so heavily on minority groups and those underachieving that the Council risked overlooking the majority. The Council's approach to government was meant to raise overall standards, not only standards in specific areas. He agreed that the Council should address the needs of minority groups with particular issues but felt it should not become so focused on them that it failed to consider where improvements could also be made for the majority.

Councillor Cusworth reiterated that this initiative was exactly about that focus. The service was already doing substantial work to raise overall attainment, but without concentrating on the targeted elements within this initiative, it would not have met the statutory duty placed on it to address those gaps. There were significant and concerning disparities between cohorts who were achieving and those who were not. Councillor Cusworth indicated she was not sure whether the comment was directed at the Council as a local authority or at national government for creating the initiative, but the Council's role was to deliver the initiative it had been given and to meet the criteria attached to the grant funding.

Councillor Blackham clarified that he was not suggesting the Council overlook children with specific needs but emphasised that the focus should not be solely on targeted groups. He stressed the importance of also raising attainment for all children under five, noting that doing so would have a significant impact overall. He reiterated that support for children with particular issues should continue, alongside wider improvement for the whole cohort.

Councillor Yasseen acknowledged Councillor Blackham's comments and clarified that the policy was not a generalist one. She noted that national data, provided by schools, clearly identified priority areas where overall performance did not meet required standards. She emphasised that this was a targeted intervention in response to outcomes falling below the national average, rather than a broad, generalist approach.

She stated that issues such as low attainment among boys on free school meals, predominantly white working-class boys, were borough-wide and should be treated as general concerns. She expressed frustration that the report did not reference ethnicity and suggested this may have been due to the report being produced quickly. She concluded that the intervention was deliberate and not intended as a generalist policy. Councillor Steele asked officers to respond and to explain why the six priorities had been chosen.

Nicola Curley, Executive Director, Children and Young People's Services explained that national policy direction required both universal and targeted measures, and further guidance from the DfE had been received during the meeting. She noted that government policy aimed to align a suite of programmes intended to raise outcomes for all children and young people, particularly in areas such as Rotherham where broader community-wide improvement was needed.

The current universal work, including the Universal Rise Programme and regional phonics initiatives across South Yorkshire was highlighted. She clarified that the policy under discussion formed the targeted element of this wider national approach, recognising that specific groups in different areas required focused support. For Rotherham, these groups included white working-class boys, the Roma community, and smaller communities not yet engaging fully with family hubs or early years provision.

It was emphasised that the ambition was challenging and would require accelerated progress for these groups, alongside continued universal support for all children. She referenced additional national developments, including the new education white paper and changes to the SEND agenda, noting the pace and at times limited coordination of government initiatives.

The Executive Director, Children and Young People's Services acknowledged the points raised regarding equality impact assessment,

confirming that further work would be incorporated into the action plan.

The Chair asked how the six priorities had been determined and whether they were driven by government requirements or local data. The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality explained that the priorities arose from a combination of government direction and local evidence. Despite limited time, officers brought together key stakeholders from the recent summit, who were presented with government requirements for the DfE and Best Start Plan, alongside local needs analysis.

She noted that local data came from Public Health, the 0–19 Service, and feedback from families and practitioners. Stakeholders also contributed professional insight on what was working well, where gaps existed, and which groups were less engaged. Collectively, the group developed shared principles and agreed the six priorities.

Councillor McKiernan asked about the funding (0.6, 0.3 and under £2m per year). He noted that the delivery plan had not yet been shared and queried where the funding would be allocated, expressing concern that the amount did not seem sufficient to make a meaningful impact borough-wide. He also asked whether the funding would support existing activity or be used to recruit staff and sought clarity on the intended use of the money.

The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality explained that the additional funding was intended to enhance existing delivery with a specific focus on the new plan, particularly targeting vulnerable groups. It was noted that separate funding for family hubs and family help was already in place and continuing, ensuring universal access and support without needing to draw on this new allocation. She highlighted that Rotherham had a strong starting point, with well-funded voluntary sector provision, good-quality early years providers, embedded training, sufficient childcare places and strong outreach.

She confirmed that final decisions on the specific use of the additional funding would be made through the delivery plan but emphasised that the priority would be addressing gaps for specific cohorts identified through needs analysis. This included work on engaging families not currently prioritising early development activities, raising awareness through community-led campaigns and supporting children identified by health visitors as having early developmental concerns. The new funding would be used to fill these targeted gaps, alongside other existing funding streams supporting the wider Best Start Local plan.

Councillor McKiernan raised a second question regarding the governance structure. He commented that the structure shown on page 89 appeared overly complex, with numerous boards, plans and task-and-finish groups, and noted that he did not usually scrutinise children's services. It was asked whether the governance arrangements had been reviewed and if

there was scope to simplify them.

Councillor Cusworth commented that the complexity of the governance arrangements reflected the current approach of the DfE, with programmes such as Best Start 0–5, Family Hubs and Healthy Babies spanning multiple disciplines. She noted that this work did not sit neatly within a single area, with Public Health also playing a key role. She explained that many cabinet members for children and young people were not typically involved in infant-focused programmes, making this a new and evolving area. She felt the cross-disciplinary approach was positive in reducing silo working, but acknowledged it contributed to the complexity of the governance structure. She highlighted the involvement of the Health and Wellbeing Board and her own and the Executive Director for Children and Young People's Services representation on it. She concluded by noting that everyone was still adjusting to this new way of working.

The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality reassured members that although the task-and-finish groups appeared clustered together in the governance diagram, they consisted of operational managers and staff who were focused on delivering specific actions collaboratively. She explained that the more complex section above this was managed by senior officers and was familiar territory. She noted that not having these groups in place would risk losing alignment and awareness across related workstreams, which would create greater challenges than managing the complexity itself.

The report's focus on parental and carer mental health and highlighted national concerns about inadequate postnatal mental health provision. Councillor Keenan asked how the Council was working with mental health providers on this issue and whether there was an opportunity for further scrutiny of postnatal mental health care in Rotherham, potentially through the Improving Lives or Health Scrutiny Committees. She stressed that this was an important issue, particularly for babies aged 0–5.

It was confirmed that postnatal mental health was a key priority. Although it was not referenced as explicitly within this specific plan, it was a clear focus within the Best Start Family Hubs programme, where Rotherham had been working as a pilot area. The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality acknowledged the significant challenges nationally and locally in addressing both perinatal and postnatal mental health needs and reiterated that this remained a core element of the wider Best Start Family Hubs work.

Councillor Monk asked about the subjectivity of the assessment scores, noting that the 2–2½-year review was carried out in the home by primary care professionals who spent more one-to-one time with the child than teachers completing assessments two years later. She queried how this difference in context and assessor familiarity was being addressed.

The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality

acknowledged the point raised by Councillor Monk and confirmed that Niall Devlin, Education Inclusion Service Director, had been working closely with schools, nurseries and early years settings to address disparities in assessment practice. It was noted that inconsistencies existed both locally and nationally, including variation in how teachers interpreted specific requirements of the five-year assessment. Work was already underway through the early years team and with academy partners, including leadership from White Woods, to ensure a more consistent and fair approach and to give children the best opportunity to demonstrate their abilities accurately.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children & Young People added that the Rotherham Education and Strategic Partnership had been established to drive improvements in attainment across the borough. She reported strong buy-in from schools and multi-academy trusts, with at least two Multi Academy Trust (MAT) CEOs involved, including the Chief Executive of White Woods, who had recently attended a conference in Blackpool and shared the learning with the partnership. She highlighted this as a positive example of collaborative working. Members were also reminded of the Early Years Festival taking place the following week at the Rockingham Development Centre, with a range of events available for those wishing to attend.

Councillor A Carter built on earlier points regarding perinatal and postnatal mental health. He noted that specialist services provided strong support for parents experiencing severe conditions, such as psychosis or suicidal ideation, but expressed concern that parents with mild to moderate postnatal mental health issues were often directed to IAPT talking therapies due to service capacity. He highlighted the potential negative impact this could have on infants in their first two years and asked whether more targeted work was needed to support parents with mild to moderate mental health needs.

The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality agreed with Councillor Carter's concerns and explained that the Best Start Family Hubs programme had already identified the need to improve support for parents with mild to moderate perinatal and postnatal mental health needs. Although investment had been committed to build additional capacity, they had not yet been able to secure the required specialist expertise to deliver this support at the right level. Addressing this gap remained a priority and would continue under the Family Hubs programme, which was why it was not referenced explicitly in this report. The aim was to provide accessible, stigma-free support within the Family Hubs offer rather than expecting parents to seek help in separate settings.

Members discussed earlier comments regarding terminology in the Early Years Plan, specifically the reference to "nursery settings." They considered whether the wording should be updated to better reflect the full range of early years provision or whether a glossary should be added for clarity. The Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality

advised that adding a glossary would be the most effective approach and confirmed that this would be undertaken, with new terms added as needed.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Note the activity to date to improve early years outcomes and tackle inequalities.
2. Approve the Best Start Local Plan for implementation from April 2026.

An additional recommendation to Cabinet was that:

- Agree that CYPS work with the DPSE to identify information in relation to specific neighbourhoods, and this informs the development and work of the Best Start Local Plan.

Further actions that arose from discussions were that:

- CYPS agreed to include a glossary to clarify terminology for the public.

119. TRANSPORT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27

At the Chair's invitation the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, Councillor Williams presented the 2026–27 Transport Capital Programme ahead of Cabinet consideration. He introduced Lucy Hudson as the new permanent Head of Transportation Infrastructure and thanked Nat Porter for his interim leadership.

The programme set out planned investment in highways and transport, including maintenance, road safety, active travel, structures work and sustainable transport. Key schemes included ward-level road safety funding, Old Flatts Bridge repairs, the annual maintenance programme, design work for Fleet Bridge and new pedestrian crossings, continued minor works and design work for Treeton Lane crossroads. Funding was also allocated to develop improvements at school crossing patrol sites. Any underspend would support other approved projects or future design work.

The Service Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport, Simon Moss, noted that Members had already discussed the schemes and allocations referenced in recommendation 1, agreed through the recent Council budget. Simon then outlined the funding position relating to recommendation 2, covering the schemes in section 2 of the report. This represented the final year of a five-year block transport funding programme, comprising £344,000 for local transport and £426,000 for highway structures. The £344,000 allocation, shown in table 1, focused on pedestrian crossings, which remained a key community priority. A further £15,000 was allocated for monitoring and evaluation, £4,000 for school crossing patrol improvements, and the remaining structures funding was set out in section 2.2.

The Vice-Chair, Councillor Bacon raised questions regarding the Treeton Lane crossroads. He noted that, in previous years, he had been advised that making changes at the junction would simply relocate the problem elsewhere and was therefore not considered worthwhile by the service or the Cabinet Member at that time. He asked what had changed since that earlier position.

In response it was explained that congestion-relief schemes were challenging to design because satellite navigation systems could redirect additional traffic through improved junctions, which was likely the basis of the earlier advice given. While this remained a consideration, he noted that other factors, such as traffic movements and junction geometry, would now be examined through the planned study to identify potential improvements at the Treeton Lane crossroads.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy added that the decision to invest in design work for the Treeton Lane crossroads was a positive step. He confirmed that the long-standing concerns about the junction were recognised and that funding had now been allocated to develop and assess preferred improvement options, addressing issues that had been raised over many years.

The Vice-Chair sought clarification on why the departmental view on the Treeton Lane crossroads had changed, noting that previous advice suggested improvements would be ineffective. He asked whether this shift resulted from a political decision or a change in officer assessment and requested further detail on what the £150,000 allocation would deliver.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy responded that the investment reflected recognition of long-standing concerns at the junction. He stated that, while all decisions had a political element, the budget process had provided the opportunity to commit funding for a study to identify preferred improvement options. Officers were to provide further detail on the scope of the planned work.

In his response the Service Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport explained that the £150,000 allocation would fund initial feasibility work, including analysis of junction geometry, traffic flows and potential treatment options. This work would be used to design a preferred option. He noted that the next steps would depend on the scale of the intervention identified: lower-cost solutions could progress further into detailed design within the same funding, whereas larger schemes would require more extensive design work and the development of a business case to secure additional funding.

The Vice-Chair asked whether, following the feasibility work, the Council would be prepared to prioritise and fund any resulting scheme, noting the risk of spending £150,000 on design work without delivering improvements. He sought assurance from Councillor Williams that the

project would remain a priority once the preferred option and its costs were known.

Councillor Williams responded that the same challenge applied to ward road safety plans: investment in design work needed to lead to deliverable schemes. He stated that officers were confident that additional funding, through the next five-year South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) settlement, would be available to support future projects once the current five-year programme ended. While he could not make firm commitments at this stage, he was confident that, having chosen to fund the design work for Treeton Lane crossroads, the Council would look to progress the scheme when further funding became available.

Councillor Yasseen sought clarification on the pedestrian crossings programme, noting that the report referenced five schemes. She asked which five locations had been identified, how these priorities had been determined, and whether Broome Lane was included. In response Councillor Williams explained that the Transportation Service had undertaken a borough-wide assessment of approximately 60 pedestrian crossing requests over the past year. The prioritisation report was due to be published shortly and would set out the full ranked list. He confirmed that funding had been allocated to deliver the highest-priority crossing and, separately, to design five additional crossings so they were ready for construction when further funding became available. The Service Manager, Transport Planning & Policy added that the Broome Lane zebra crossing was already being reviewed as part of the funded CRSTS major scheme on Broome Road and Wickersley Road, including the neighbourhood streets element. Design work for this upgrade was already underway. The additional funding referenced in the report related to further pedestrian crossing schemes beyond those already included in the existing programme.

In a further question Councillor Yasseen emphasised the importance of ensuring high-quality design by incorporating local knowledge alongside expert input. She cited recent infrastructure schemes where residents felt changes had reduced safety or usability, highlighting the example of the Masbrough Street/Centenary Way junction and issues reported on Sheffield Road's cycle lane layout. She stressed the need for closer engagement with communities to understand how public spaces are used in practice and asked whether residents could be more involved in the development of future public realm schemes.

The Chair asked officers to explain how safety was considered in the design of road, roundabout and crossing schemes. Simon Moss responded that all projects were required to meet national technical guidance and safety standards. He acknowledged the importance of community consultation and noted that local input was a key part of scheme development, particularly for programmes such as ward road safety plans and minor works, which were shaped from the ground up.

Councillor Adair echoed concerns raised earlier and noted that he had long campaigned for improvements at the Treeton Lane crossroads. He expressed hope that the issue could now be resolved.

Councillor Allen asked two questions. She first sought clarification on how schemes were prioritised, noting references to prioritisation for school crossing patrol improvements and, separately, within the Transportation Minor Works Programme. She queried whether prioritisation was based solely on technical assessment or whether community pressure played a role, particularly given that minor works often responded to issues important to local residents.

The Service Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport clarified that pedestrian crossing schemes and minor works were prioritised using technical criteria, though the two programmes operated at different scales and costs. He noted that while public requests were an important source of information, the volume of requests alone did not determine priority. It was confirmed that the minor works process had been reviewed, with data gathered to support consistent prioritisation. Lucy Hudson added that she was assessing all aspects of the service to ensure an appropriate balance between technical assessment and community voice and would continue collaborating with councillors to deliver programmes that met both local needs and evidence-based requirements.

In her follow up question Councillor Allen asked about the role of ward members in scheme development and consultation. She noted that while community engagement was referenced, it was unclear how ward member input was incorporated. She queried whether, once schemes were prioritised, officers would return to ward members or committees such as Improving Places before decisions were finalised, or whether decisions would rest solely with Cabinet. She also expressed concern about the scale of delegations proposed within the preferred option.

The Chair reminded members that decisions were made for the whole authority, not individual wards, and agreed that officers should explain to ward members when requests could not be taken forward.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy added that the ward road safety plans were designed to strengthen the role of ward members by formally setting out each ward's priorities, concerns and resident feedback. He explained that this process would help identify which issues could be addressed through minor works and which might require larger schemes. He noted that officers, had already been engaging directly with residents and local representatives, and stressed the commitment to ensuring members had a strong voice in shaping road safety priorities.

Councillor McKiernan welcomed the planned Old Flatts Bridge repair, noting it had been a longstanding concern. He then asked whether resurfacing decisions took account of planned nearby developments, for

example, whether roads in poor condition were intentionally not resurfaced if upcoming construction traffic was expected to damage a newly laid surface.

Simon explained that the Council co-ordinated highway maintenance with planned development activity to avoid resurfacing roads shortly before they might be disturbed by construction traffic. He confirmed that discussions between services took place to avoid unnecessary rework, though they would not normally delay maintenance for prolonged periods; a delay of up to two years would be considered excessive. Decisions were made on a case-by-case basis, with input from relevant services and ward members.

Councillor McKiernan asked about the future of the five-year transport funding programme (LNTCP), noting it had now ended and seeking information on what would replace it. The Service Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport explained that the Local Neighbourhood Complementary Transport Programme, previously funded through the CRSTS settlement, had concluded. The new five-year funding stream would be the Transforming Cities Fund (TCF). Colleagues at SYMCA were developing a regional transport vision and a new Local Transport Plan, which would guide future allocations across South Yorkshire. It was confirmed that further detail would come forward in next year's programme report.

Councillor Tinsley BEM sought reassurance that findings from the ongoing school road safety review at Improving Places would be reflected in ward road safety plans and school crossing improvements. He also asked whether clear guidance would be provided on the types of measures considered effective, noting that previous reviews had found certain visual interventions (such as road markings) to be ineffective compared with physical traffic-calming measures like speed humps or speed cameras. He requested clarity on what interventions were considered effective and deliverable.

It was confirmed that the school crossing patrol review was being aligned with ward road safety plans and that each ward would receive a safety masterplan, including at least one scheme developed to funding-ready stage. It was stressed that measures implemented would be those capable of delivering meaningful improvements. While evidence on the effectiveness of smaller interventions could vary, it was noted that decisions balanced technical data with community perceptions of safety. The aim of working with ward members to reach consensus on appropriate and effective measures was emphasised.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy noted that the service had recently placed greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of delivered schemes. He acknowledged that this had not been done consistently in the past but confirmed that the interim head had strengthened this focus. He highlighted that £15,000 had

been allocated in the Transport Capital Programme specifically for monitoring and evaluation work, including assessment of the new cycle lane and pedestrian crossing at Wath.

The Vice-Chair stated that he remained unsatisfied with the explanations provided regarding how the decision to progress the Treeton Lane crossroads study had been made. He requested that a written response be provided from the department setting out who made the decision, how it was reached, and what had changed since the earlier position. He then asked why the ward road safety plans were being developed over two years rather than one and sought clarification on how many schemes were expected to progress to delivery following completion of the plans.

In response the Service Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport explained that the ward road safety plans were phased over two years because of the scale of the work and the volume of issues typically raised during ward-level discussions. Spreading the work over two years ensured sufficient time and resources to develop the plans properly. Each ward would have at least one scheme developed to a funding-ready stage, with the intention of delivering as many schemes as future budgets allowed. It was noted that the number and pace of delivery would depend on the scale and cost of the interventions identified through the process.

The Chair noted that the committee did not require a formal recommendation to Cabinet, as the request concerned officers providing the information to the Vice-Chair directly. The Service Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport agreed to provide a written explanation outlining how the decision regarding Treeton Lane crossroads had been made and what, if anything, had changed. The Vice-Chair then asked how long the previous LNRS (Local Neighbourhood Road Safety) schemes had taken to develop and whether the reference to learning from earlier programmes related specifically to the LNRS process. In response Simon confirmed that the learning referenced did relate to the previous LNRS programmes (LNRS1 and LNRS2). He noted that experience from those programmes, particularly from LNRS1, had informed the decision to phase the ward road safety plans over two years, as this was considered a more practical and effective approach.

Councillor Blackham sought clarification on delegated powers and how they would affect spending. It was explained that delegated authority was being requested for the Executive Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to approve schemes within the minor works programme and school crossing patrol improvements, as these were small projects requiring timely decisions. Delegation was also requested to allow the reallocation of any programme underspends to other approved schemes or to progress future pipeline projects. In response to questions from the Chair, it was confirmed they would inform ward members of any proposals relating to their areas before decisions were taken.

In his supplementary question Councillor Blackham sought further clarity

on the scope of the delegated powers, expressing concern that the wording in the report appeared too broad. He asked why the delegations could not be explicitly limited to the specific schemes referenced, such as minor works and school crossing patrol improvements, rather than framed more generally.

Councillor Williams explained that the Cabinet Member's role came at the final stage of the process. Ward members would identify priorities and work directly with officers on minor works proposals long before schemes reached him for approval. He assured members that ward input would shape decisions early on, with his role providing final oversight and audit. Councillor Blackham maintained that the delegated powers described in the report were too broad and should be more narrowly defined to improve clarity and reassure members.

The Chair noted he disagreed, commenting that Cabinet Members were elected to take responsibility and should retain final decision-making powers.

Going back to an earlier comment the Vice-Chair suggested that it would be useful for this committee, or for Improving Places Select Commission, to receive information on the lessons learned from previous programmes such as LNRS, and for this to be shared publicly so residents could also understand what had been learned. In response it was confirmed that officers were happy to provide information on lessons learned from previous schemes, such as LNRS, to the Improving Places Select Commission.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Notes the schemes and allocations of funding, as set out in paragraph 2.3, subject to approval of the Council Budget on 4 March 2026.
2. Approves the schemes and allocations of funding outlined in Section 2 of this report, including the reallocation of savings made on capital projects delivered within budget as described in paragraph 1.6.
3. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, to determine the schemes to be delivered in 2026-27 through to 2029-30 with the Minor Works allocation, subject to approval of the Council Budget in March 2026.
4. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, to determine the schemes to be delivered in 2026-27 with the School Crossing Patrol Improvements allocation referred to in paragraph 2.2.6.
5. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, to determine the use of

any underspends across the Transport Capital Programme to fund the delivery of other approved transport programmes, or the progression of designs for potential future projects.

Further actions that arose from discussions were that:

- Councillor Bacon requested that the service provide, in writing, an explanation of who had made the decision to progress the Treeton Lane Crossroad proposal, detailing what had changed from the previous departmental advice.
- The Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) would receive an update on lessons learned from the LNRS (Local Neighbourhood Road Safety) programme.

120. WORK PROGRAMME

The Governance Manager began by providing an update on Water Safety Equipment and Bylaws Review Group noted that the group met recently to review the status of the 2022 motion on life-saving equipment and related bylaws. They concluded that the motion had already been discharged and that the current review duplicated earlier work. Members agreed that issues around life-saving equipment were largely resolved, with little evidence of ongoing problems. They instead raised broader concerns about outdated bylaws, inconsistent park rules, antisocial behaviour, and the potential use of PSPOs.

Officers advised that updating bylaws would require significant resources and robust supporting evidence. The group agreed to close the current review and use the Discrete Need Prioritisation Matrix to determine whether a wider review of public space enforcement measures, including bylaws and PSPOs across parks and country parks, was justified. The Chair had contacted all councillors to gather borough-wide evidence on park issues to inform future discussions.

The Vice-Chair questioned the robustness of the evidence feeding into the scrutiny topic prioritisation matrix. He expressed concern that relying mainly on the Chair's email survey of members would make it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions and might result in a lower matrix score that could prevent further examination of bylaws and PSPOs. He asked whether the Chair intended to follow up with non-responding members and whether additional evidence, such as antisocial behaviour and crime data, would also be included.

The Chair confirmed that he did not intend to call members who had not responded, as they had been given sufficient time and could still approach him if they wished. He stated he would use the information received appropriately within the matrix. He agreed to raise antisocial behaviour issues with officers to identify what data could be supplied. He reiterated that elected members needed to engage if they wanted issues to be taken forward.

Councillor McKiernan reminded the group that the previous review was closed because it had become too broad and noted that the current process aimed to focus on specific, evidence-based issues. This was why the Chair had written to all members requesting clear priorities.

The Vice-Chair maintained that antisocial behaviour was clearly a wider concern for the Council and welcomed the commitment to include additional evidence in the matrix. His concern remained that the email exercise alone would not be sufficient.

The Governance Manager clarified that scrutiny members, including the Vice-Chair, would have the opportunity to participate directly in the prioritisation discussion that informs the matrix. This session would take place in closed session at a future meeting, either next month or the following one, depending on the agenda being considered.

Resolved: That the Work Programme be approved.

121. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

Health Select Commission update:

The Chair informed members that preparation of the Menopause Scrutiny Review report was nearing completion and would be presented to the Health Select Committee on the 14th. The group had already completed its site visit to Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) Centre at Rotherham Hospital, while the joint lung clinic visit with Barnsley had been postponed and rescheduled.

It was also noted that the South Yorkshire Cancer Alliance Lung Clinic Update, along with SDEC Implementation Update and the Confirmation of Supplementary Public Health Grants for 2026/27, would be discussed at the next meeting.

Improving Lives Select Commission update:

The Chair highlighted the Ofsted inspection outcome considered in February. Members had examined the detail of the findings and made recommendations regarding the approach to care leavers. No further updates were added beyond what had already been recorded in the written report.

Improving Places Select Commission update:

The Chair noted that the most recent meeting had taken place before publication of the accompanying report. An update was provided on several recent items considered by the committee. The flooding alleviation update had been well received, with members recognising the significant amount of work the Council was undertaking to reduce flood risk. While not all schemes were affordable, the Council was progressing those it

could.

The Thriving Neighbourhoods report generated some discussion and differing views, but all questions were ultimately addressed. The market development item was positively received, and members valued the opportunity to visit the site in person rather than relying solely on meeting-based updates.

The Chair also provided an update on the meeting held the previous day on the review of events and the draft Playing Pitch Strategy. The session lasted longer than expected due to the high level of interest and the number of detailed questions raised, which members felt led to a constructive and worthwhile discussion. An update on this work would be presented at the next meeting.

122. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

Before outlining the forward plan, members were reminded of the items already scheduled for consideration at the April meeting: the Climate Emergency report and the Community Governance Review, both forming part of pre-decision scrutiny, along with a progress update on the future RotherCare model requested at the meeting on 9 October 2024.

The committee then reviewed items proposed for consideration by Cabinet in April. Members considered whether the Council Plan Update and the Year Ahead Plan 2026–27 should be added to the April agenda for pre-decision scrutiny, as OSMB would normally review these items. There was broad support for including it.

Members discussed overall agenda length, the feasibility of adding an additional item and the potential need to move or defer items.

The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Community Governance Review could be removed from the April agenda if necessary, noting that this would be the beginning of a lengthy process with further opportunities for member involvement. Some members felt April would be too soon for the Council Plan items.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Council Plan Update and the Year Ahead Plan were best considered together, as reviewing past performance alongside future planning offered clearer context.

Following discussions, members agreed to move the Progress Update on the Future RotherCare Model to a later meeting, leaving three main items on the April agenda. A show of hands confirmed the committee's agreement.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

1. Agreed that the following items would be added to the March

agenda as part of OSMB's pre-decision scrutiny work:

- Climate Emergency Annual Report – Pre-decision Scrutiny
- Community Governance Review – Pre-decision Scrutiny
- Council Plan Update - Year Ahead Plan 2026/27 – Pre-decision Scrutiny

2. Agreed to defer consideration of the progress update on Future Rothercare Model to the meeting on 6 May 2026.

123. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Nothing to report at this meeting.

124. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

125. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.