COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday 4 November 2026

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

Officers in attendance:

John Edwards	Chief Executive
Phil Horsfield	Service Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Emma Hill	Head of Democratic Services
Barbel Gale	Governance Manager
Samantha Mullarkey	Governance Advisor and Clerk

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

74. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed Council that this was the first meeting since the passing of Councillor John Blackham. Councillor Blackham had represented the Anston and Woodsetts Ward since 2024 and served on the Audit Committee, Improving Lives Select Commission and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. The Mayor paid tribute to his dedicated public service, commitment to his community and his role as a devoted father. The Council's condolences were extended to his children, and Members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

The Mayor also reported the sudden passing of Rachael Booth, Head Teacher of The Willows School, Thurcroft. Condolences were expressed to her family and friends. The Mayor reflected on a visit by pupils from the school to the Town Hall during his Mayoral term and noted that the picture of the Chains of Office presented by the pupils, was displayed in the Mayor's Parlour. Members observed a minute's silence in her memory.

The Mayor congratulated Rotherham Hospice on receiving two national Third Sector Awards: Medium Charity of the Year and Frontline Team of the Year for its Hospice at Home Team.

Members were advised that the Mayor had attended the Boston Castle Heritage Day Anniversary on 4 July, marking the 250th anniversary of the American Declaration of Independence, the 250th anniversary of Boston Castle and the 150th anniversary of Boston Park. The Mayor noted that a commemorative film produced by the Civic Society had been shared with

historians in America and had subsequently been shared with the White House.
The Mayor advised that a full list of mayoral engagements was included at Appendix A of the Mayor's Letter.

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Havard, Lelliott and Robinson.

76. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Councillor Ball asked for clarification regarding substitutes in relation to Council Procedure Rule 11(5), Questions to Spokesperson. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would respond by email.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 September 2026 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Read Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

77. PETITIONS

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

From Andrew Hayter: Stop the Unnecessary Felling of Mature Trees on Herringthorpe Valley Road – 467 Valid Signatures

Mr Hayter was unable to attend the meeting. In accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment would provide a written response within 10 working days.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.

2. That the relevant Executive Director be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday 18 November 2026.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

79. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were 2 public questions:

1. T: Is it really the case that if a complaint is made against a Council officer that the person making the complaint will be given no information about the complaint - has the Council abandoned the Stages referred to on its website?

   As T was not able to attend, a written response would be provided.

2. Mr Ashraf: Council Leader Chris Read, could you commit to requesting, of all who have taken up your recent flag pole offer, be made aware of the raising of the Palestinian Flag on the 29th of November, so they too, if they wish, can in compassion and solemn solidarity, raise the Palestinian flag?

   The Leader, Councillor Read, confirmed that a small number of organisations, all of which were parish councils, had taken up the offer. It was noted that the parish councils were free to use the grant for any flag-flying purpose they chose. Mr Ashraf was advised that a list of the relevant parish council contacts could be provided should he wish to make representations directly to those councils.

   In his supplementary, Mr Ashraf asked the Leader to ensure all commitments were fulfilled.

80. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the press and public.

81. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader opened his statement by expressing his condolences on the death of Rachael Booth, Head Teacher of The Willows School, Thurcroft, and paid tribute to her contribution to the school community. The Leader also associated himself with the Mayor’s remarks regarding former Councillor John Blackham and extended his condolences to his family and friends.

The Leader highlighted a number of developments since the previous Council meeting, including:

- Completion of the 850th new Council home delivered through the Council’s housing programme at Larch Road, Maltby.

- Activities undertaken during Domestic Abuse Awareness Month, including the illumination of the Town Hall in purple to raise awareness of support services and partnership work to tackle domestic abuse.

- Extended opening hours at the Borough’s four Household Waste

Recycling Centres following the insourcing of the service, with sites now open from 9.30am to 5.00pm daily, including bank holidays.

- The successful conclusion of the Library Service's Summer Reading Challenge and the introduction of new free holiday activity places during the October half-term break.

The Leader also provided an update in relation to child sexual exploitation and the forthcoming national inquiry into grooming gangs. He reflected on the impact of the Alexis Jay Report and the significant improvements made by the Council and its partners since 2014, including support provided to survivors, action taken against perpetrators and improvements within Children's Services.

Members were informed that the Council had applied for "core participant" status. The Leader explained that this status would enable the Council to play a more active role in the inquiry, including making submissions and suggesting lines of enquiry. He clarified that Rotherham had not been designated as an area for a local inquiry but stated that the Council's experience and improvement journey placed it in a strong position to contribute to the national review.

The Leader concluded by reaffirming the Council's ongoing commitment to preventing child sexual exploitation, maintaining high standards of safeguarding, and ensuring that the lessons learned in Rotherham continue to inform improvements both locally and nationally.

The Leader of the Majority Opposition Group, Councillor Zach Collingham, was invited to respond to the statement. He thanked the Mayor, Members and officers for their support following the sudden death of Councillor John Blackham and paid tribute to his life and service. He reflected on Councillor Blackham's professional background, dedication to public service, contribution to scrutiny and audit work, and commitment to his community. Members heard that Councillor Blackham was widely respected across the Council for his measured, constructive approach and his determination to make a positive difference for residents. Councillor Collingham concluded by stating that Councillor Blackham would be greatly missed and remembered for his contribution to the Borough.

The update regarding the National Child Sexual Exploitation Inquiry and the Council's application for core participant status was welcomed, with Councillor Collingham noting that Rotherham's experience and transformation over the past decade placed it in a strong position to contribute to the inquiry and support learning nationally.

Referring to the Council Plan performance report, Councillor Collingham expressed concern regarding delays to a number of key projects and initiatives, including road safety schemes, flood alleviation work, delivery of community facilities and fleet replacement programmes. He asked the

Leader to identify any common causes for delays and the steps being taken to improve delivery against agreed timescales.

The Leader of the Opposition also highlighted the findings of the recent school road safety scrutiny review and sought assurance that its recommendations would be implemented swiftly and within an ambitious timescale. He stated that the length of time taken to complete the review was unacceptable.

Finally, he raised concerns regarding declining public confidence in the Council's responsiveness to residents' concerns, citing communication issues relating to a flooded pedestrian underpass. He asked what action would be taken to improve communication with residents and address what he described as persistent shortcomings in keeping the public informed about service issues and delays.

In response, the Leader acknowledged frustrations regarding delays to individual projects but emphasised that the Council was currently delivering one of the largest capital programmes in its history, involving significant investment and physical change across the Borough. He stated that, given the scale of the programme and reductions in staffing capacity over many years, some delays were unavoidable, although efforts continued to ensure resources were directed to priority areas.

The Leader advised that progress was being made on a number of schemes referenced by the Leader of the Opposition, including road safety initiatives and projects in Maltby, and noted that activity was continuing across a wide range of capital projects alongside the successful delivery of many major commitments.

Referring to the School Road Safety Scrutiny Review, the Leader welcomed the work undertaken and confirmed that the recommendations would be considered. However, he questioned the underlying premise that school road safety should be treated separately from wider road safety concerns, suggesting that available resources should be prioritised across all road safety issues. He highlighted the additional investment that had been made in road safety measures and noted recent funding secured through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to support future improvements.

The Leader concluded by confirming that staffing capacity and resource allocation would continue to be reviewed as part of the Council’s budget-setting process to support the effective delivery of priorities and projects.

Questions from Members were invited. Councillors Adam Carter, Baum-Dixon, Fisher, Steele, Reynolds, Harrison, Tarmey, Ismail and Ball paid tribute to Councillor Blackham, echoing the comments made by the Mayor, Leader and Leader of the Opposition. Tributes were also paid to Rachael Booth.

In response to the comments from the Leader of the Opposition regarding the Scrutiny Review, Councillor Steele stated that, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, he had instructed officers to ensure that reviews took no longer than three months to complete.

Councillor Reynolds asked if there were any written contracts detailing how durable or how long a road repair should be expected to last as he had noticed many issues with repairs to roundabouts. He also asked when decisive action on grooming gangs would be taken and referenced correspondence with the Muslim Council of Great Britain.

The Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided regarding the durability of road repairs.

In response to Councillor Reynolds' comments, Councillor Ismail stated that CSE affected every single culture and religion, not just Islam.

The Leader responded to the comments made by Councillors Reynolds and Ismail on the grooming gangs. He acknowledged that the majority of perpetrators involved in the model of child sexual exploitation examined by the Jay Report in Rotherham were men from the Pakistani heritage community. He noted that similar patterns of offending had been identified in some other areas of the country. However, he emphasised that child sexual exploitation and abuse take a variety of forms and are perpetrated by individuals, mainly men, from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

The Leader stated that it was important to recognise all forms of offending while remaining clear-eyed about the evidence relating to specific patterns of abuse. He further highlighted the support received from local Muslim communities and mosques since publication of the reports, noting their consistent condemnation of child sexual exploitation, their rejection of such behaviour as contrary to religious values, and their commitment to ensuring it was not tolerated within their communities. The Leader expressed his appreciation for their continued support in promoting these messages.

Councillor Harrison also asked whether the inquiry would consider issues of accountability and whether any related proceedings or actions would be undertaken as part of the review.

In response to Councillor Harrison, the Leader advised that decisions about accountability and any resulting action would be a matter for the national inquiry itself. Previous attempts to hold individuals accountable had been constrained by employment law and other legal limitations, although some individuals had subsequently left their positions and, in certain cases, been subject to professional regulatory processes. The Leader stated that he believed there should be a wider national discussion about the threshold for criminal liability where there had been serious and sustained systemic failures in public services. While

recognising that individuals should not be held criminally liable for isolated mistakes, he suggested that consideration should be given to whether those with statutory responsibility for services should face greater accountability where significant failings persisted over a prolonged period. He added that the inquiry was likely to provide a degree of public accountability through the examination of evidence and questioning of individuals involved, although he could not comment on what further action, if any, the inquiry might ultimately recommend.

Councillor Ball raised concerns about the affordability of running newly built all-electric homes, particularly those fitted with air source heat pumps, electric vehicle charging points and electric showers but not solar panels. Referring to the Council's previous declaration of a Climate Emergency, Councillor Ball questioned whether residents could face fuel poverty during winter months due to high electricity usage and asked that the matter be reviewed.

In response, the Leader stated that he understood that new-build properties fitted with air source heat pumps were generally constructed to higher insulation standards than older properties undergoing retrofit works, resulting in greater energy efficiency. Through the Warm Homes Programme, hundreds of Council properties across the Borough were currently being retrofitted with solar panels, with the programme expected to expand to thousands of homes in future phases. The Leader emphasised that improving energy efficiency across the Council's housing stock remained an ongoing priority.

It was confirmed that a written response would be provided to the specific question raised by Councillor Ball.

82. CARE LEAVERS' CHARTER

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the adoption of the Rotherham Care Leavers' Charter. Members were advised that the Charter was founded on the principle that young people leaving care should receive the same opportunities, support and aspirations that any good parent would seek for their own child, reflecting the Council's role as a corporate parent.

It was noted that the Charter had been developed in partnership with care-experienced young people through the Look Ahead Participation Group, ensuring that their views and experiences had directly shaped its content. Members heard that young people had highlighted the importance of suitable housing, practical support, trusted relationships and assistance during their transition to independent living.

The Charter set out commitments across housing, education, employment, health and wellbeing, including housing and tenancy support, access to apprenticeships, work experience and employability

opportunities, guaranteed interviews for Council vacancies where essential criteria were met, and support to access health and wellbeing services. Members were also advised that eligibility for the Council's Rothercard discount scheme would be extended to care leavers up to the age of 25.

Councillor Cusworth emphasised that the Charter represented a wider commitment to tackling stigma and discrimination, promoting positive outcomes for care-experienced young people and ensuring their voices remained central to decision-making. The importance of support from partner organisations, including housing providers, educational establishments, health services, employers and community organisations, was also highlighted.

Tribute was paid to the young people who had contributed to the development of the Charter, and Members were invited to demonstrate their support by signing the Charter following the meeting.

In seconding the report, Councillor Baker-Rogers stated that the Charter would be a great source of support and make a significant contribution to care leavers achieving their full potential and their best possible outcomes.

Councillor Beresford confirmed that there was a dedicated housing officer to support care leavers.

Councillors A Carter, Harrison Monk and Currie expressed their support for the Charter.

Councillor Harrison asked why the Council Tax reduction of 100% stopped at age 21 when other provisions were provided until age 25. He asked if the discount could be tapered down rather than stopped altogether. Councillor Cusworth agreed to raise the matter with officers.

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Adopt the Rotherham Care Leavers' Charter as a statement of the Council's commitment to Care Leavers and care experienced young adults in Rotherham.

2. Recognise the role of all elected members as Corporate Parents and support the principles contained within the Charter in their decision-making and leadership responsibilities.

3. Support the promotion of the Charter across the Council and partner organisations to strengthen opportunities, services and outcomes for Care Leavers.

Mover: Councillor Cusworth Seconder: Councillor Baker-Rogers

83. CABINET'S RESPONSE TO THE HEALTH SELECT COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS – MENOPAUSE

Consideration was given to the report which presented Cabinet's response to the Health Select Commission's recommendations following their review on menopause. Councillor Baker-Rogers thanked the Health Select Commission for its work on the spotlight review into menopause and perimenopause. The review considered the experiences of women across the Borough and identified opportunities to improve awareness, support and partnership working.

Cabinet welcomed and supported the intent of all the recommendations. However, it was noted that some recommendations required action from organisations outside the Council's direct control, including NHS bodies, GP practices and education providers, and were therefore only partially accepted.

Members were advised that the proposed response would build on existing work, strengthen partnership arrangements through the Rotherham Women's Health Network, and support collaborative action to improve services and support for women across the Borough.

The Chair of the Health Select Commission, Councillor Keenan, welcomed Cabinet's positive response to the menopause and perimenopause review. She highlighted the significant impact menopause could have on women's health, wellbeing, employment and family life, and noted that evidence gathered during the review demonstrated a need for greater awareness, information and support. She welcomed Cabinet's commitment to progressing the recommendations, including awareness-raising initiatives, menopause champions and strengthened community support, and stated that the review would help ensure women felt better informed, supported and able to access appropriate help.

Councillor Steele praised the positive impact that Scrutiny was having and Councillor Currie voiced his support for the recommendations.

Resolved:

That Council note the response to the recommendations, as detailed in the Cabinet report of 14 September 2026.

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers Seconder: Councillor Read

84. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR RAWMARSH EAST

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

In moving the report, Councillor Hughes highlighted the close collaboration between Members representing Rawmarsh East and Rawmarsh West, noting that despite the administrative boundary, the wards continued to work together on shared priorities and projects.

Councillor Hughes thanked Members from across the Council for their support of the local food bank following an appeal for assistance, noting that their contributions had helped the service continue operating and had created links with other organisations able to provide support. Members also heard about work undertaken to address deprivation within the ward, including collaboration with the Community Pantry to improve access to affordable food for residents. The importance of literacy and community activities was highlighted, with reference made to local participation in the Summer Reading Challenge and the range of activities available through local library services. Investment in community facilities and play equipment was also identified as a priority for the ward.

Seconding the report, Councillor Shepherd highlighted environmental improvements undertaken within the ward over a number of years. He outlined the development of the local Friends of Green Spaces group, established with support from residents and volunteers to improve and maintain local green spaces. Members were advised that the group had undertaken regular litter-picking and environmental improvement activities, removing significant amounts of waste from parks, woodlands and public areas, as well as supporting community initiatives such as poppy displays, bulb planting and wildflower projects. Tribute was paid to the volunteers, neighbourhood officers and Street Scene staff whose ongoing efforts had contributed to making the ward cleaner and greener.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

85. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLOR FOR RAWMARSH WEST

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

In moving the report, Councillor Baker-Rogers highlighted the ward's priority of improving the health and wellbeing of local residents. Members

were advised of investments made in Rosehill Park, including the provision of outdoor gym equipment, refurbishment of the children's play area and improvements to tennis court facilities. The contribution of community activities such as the junior park run and the Santa Dash was also recognised.

Councillor Baker-Rogers noted that efforts had also been made to support residents who were less able to access the park, including funding weekly chair exercise sessions for older residents. Thanks were expressed to Council officers, partner organisations and fellow ward councillors for their support in delivering these initiatives and improving services for local residents.

Seconding the report, Councillor Steele emphasised the strong partnership working between Members representing Rawmarsh West and Rawmarsh East. He highlighted a range of community activities supported within the ward, including seasonal events in Rosehill Park, work to establish a Friends group for the park, support for community centres and older residents, community skips and environmental improvement projects. He also praised local volunteers and residents for their contribution to strengthening community life and improving the local environment.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

86. NOTICE OF MOTION - LET'S HAVE PRIDE IN ROTHERHAM

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

The original Motion was moved by Councillor Adam Carter and seconded by Councillor Tarmey. The amendment was moved by Councillor Read and seconded by Councillor Baker-Rogers.

The substantive motion was therefore:

Summary/Background:

This council believes that Rotherham is a place of heritage, enterprise, community spirit and shared pride.

This council notes with concern the rhetoric used by right wing political parties and others, who seek to portray Britain and Britain's towns as broken, failing and divided. Such language does not reflect the hard work and co-operation of residents, volunteers, small businesses, public servants, community groups, faith organisations, charities, schools, sports

clubs and many other local campaigners who improve our area every day.

INSERT:
This Council further notes that pride in place is strengthened when residents can see real improvements in their daily lives: good jobs, thriving high streets, quality housing, safe neighbourhoods, reliable public services and opportunities for future generations. Council believes that the best answer to those who seek to divide communities or undermine confidence in local areas is practical action that improves people's lives and strengthens community cohesion.

True pride in Britain is not found in division. It is found in building up our communities, backing local people, celebrating our shared heritage, investing in the places we call home, and ensuring that everyone who contributes to local life is seen, valued and thanked.

Council further believes that civic pride is a practical commitment to improving the area now and for future generations. It means cleaner streets, thriving high streets, well-used parks and green spaces, active community venues, inclusive events, visible heritage, vibrant local culture, and opportunities for residents to shape the future of their neighbourhoods.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Affirm at every opportunity its pride in our local area and publicly reject attempts to talk down Britain, our towns, or the people who live and work in them.

INSERT:

2. ***Reject calls from those that would cut the Council's events programme that brings our communities together, regeneration schemes that create jobs and leisure opportunities, affordable housing programme that brings security to Rotherham families, and enforcement services that help to keep our streets safe and well presented.***

3. Ask Cabinet to consider:

    a. **INSERT:** ***How the council can continue to support events like Rotherham Day and Rotherham Show***, **DELETE ~~[launching of an annual "Pride in Rotherham" programme,]~~** bringing together residents, businesses, schools, voluntary organisations and community groups to celebrate what is best about our area.

b. **DELETE ~~[establishing a Civic Pride Week, including]~~**
INSERT: *Showcasing* events in town centres, villages and neighbourhoods such as local history walks, community clean-ups, cultural showcases, school projects, heritage displays, sports taster sessions and celebrations of local food, music and creativity.

c. **DELETE: ~~[expanding the Community Champions scheme to recognise residents and organisations who go above and beyond for others, including volunteers, carers, youth leaders, veterans, emergency service workers, educators, health and social care staff, neighbourhood organisers, environmental volunteers, charity workers and small businesses that support community life.]~~**

d. **INSERT: *Further promote VAR and RTP's Annual Community Achievement Awards, which celebrate exceptional volunteers and voluntary organisations in our community.***

e. Holding an annual **DELETE: ~~[Community Champions reception or awards event with nominations open to the public and a particular focus on unsung heroes.]~~**
INSERT: *Love Where You Live volunteers celebration event, for those who selflessly maintain our public spaces.*

4. Ask scrutiny to review how the Council:

a. Supports schools and youth organisations to take part in civic pride activities, including projects on local history, democracy, volunteering and the contribution young people make to the area.

b. Works with local businesses, markets, cultural venues, sports clubs, faith groups and voluntary organisations to promote positive stories about the area and encourage residents to shop local, volunteer local and celebrate local.

c. Explores funding opportunities, partnerships and sponsorship to support civic pride events and community-led improvements, ensuring that activity is inclusive, accessible

and spread across different neighbourhoods.

5. Invite ward councillors to work with residents and local organisations to identify local pride projects, including improvements to public spaces, street planting, litter reduction, heritage interpretation, community art, shopfront improvements and better promotion of local events.

6. **DELETE ~~[Request that officers bring forward a report to the Cabinet setting out a proposed timetable, budget options, partnership opportunities and measurable outcomes for the Civic Pride Week, Community Champions scheme and wider "Pride in Rotherham" programme.]~~**

A second amendment had been received which was not accepted by the mover and seconder of the original motion.

The second amendment was moved by Councillor Baum-Dixon and seconded by Councillor Z Collingham:

Summary/Background:

This council believes that Rotherham is a place of heritage, enterprise, community spirit and shared pride.

DELETE ~~This council notes with concern the rhetoric used by right wing political parties and others, who seek to portray Britain and Britain's towns as broken, failing and divided~~

INSERT: ***This council notes with concern rhetoric that seeks to portray Britain and Britain's towns as broken, failing and divided.***

No further changes were proposed to the motion as a result of this amendment.

On being put to the vote, the second amendment fell.

The substantive motion was then debated, put to the vote and was carried.

87. NOTICE OF MOTION - SUPPORT CARE LEAVERS

It was moved by Councillor Cusworth and seconded by Councillor Clarke that:

Summary/Background:

This Council recognises that all councillors are corporate parents and reaffirms its collective commitment to supporting our care leavers.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Support the illumination of the Town Hall in blue on a suitable date during Care Leavers Month in November, as a visible demonstration of that commitment, excluding 2–11 November inclusive and 29 November in recognition of previously scheduled awareness events.

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

88. NOTICE OF MOTION - EDUCATION EMERGENCY

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

That this Council notes:

- Educational inequality can emerge in the early years and widen through school and into further education, training and work. This is a longstanding emergency, not a new or sudden issue: evidence and warnings have accumulated over a generation, while too many barriers remain.
- Rotherham's overall attainment is often close to or above the national average, but this masks significantly poorer outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and areas. National evidence shows particularly low attainment and progression among White British boys eligible for free school meals; local data should establish whether the same pattern exists in Rotherham.
- In 2024/25, 44.2% of Rotherham children eligible for free school meals achieved a Good Level of Development at age five, compared with 64.9% of all children. The report also records a 14.4 percentage point early years gender gap, with boys less likely than girls to achieve this measure.
- In 2024/25, the KS2 reading, writing and maths gap between disadvantaged pupils and others was 25.7 percentage points in Rotherham, compared with 21.7 nationally.
- In 2025/26, 45.2% of pupils eligible for free school meals met the standard in this measure, well below the Borough average of 61.8% and 48.4% of eligible pupils nationally.
- Rotherham's 2025 Attainment 8 score was 41.8, compared with 46.2 nationally; and 30.7% for children eligible for free school meals, well below the Borough average.
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (2025) identifies 17.2% of Rotherham children aged 0–15 as living in neighbourhoods among the 5% most deprived nationally for education, skills and training, including 7.6% in the most deprived 1%.
- Nearly half of Rotherham's children aged 0-15 live in income deprived families: 46% (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

2026) , compared with 38% nationally. Ofsted reports that 13,132 pupils (31.5%) are eligible for free school meals, compared with 27.4% nationally. Council figures show that 12,650 children were FSM-eligible in 2023/24, an 84% increase since 2015/16.

- Rotherham's 2022/23 higher education progression rate was 38% by age 19, compared with 48% nationally. The latest national figures show that 28.6% of FSM-eligible pupils had entered higher education by age 19 by 2024/25, falling to 13% for FSM-eligible White British boys (least likely to progress to higher education). These gaps underline the need for practical, needs based support across all communities.
- The Council's 'No Family Left Behind' Strategy, developed following a motion passed in September 2024 (Led by Cllr Yasseen and Cllr Currie) provides an existing framework for joining work on child poverty and family educational success.
- Sheffield Hallam University launched the South Yorkshire Boys' Impact Hub in February 2026, it brings together educators, researchers and policymakers to address educational barriers facing boys and young men from lower income backgrounds.
- SYMCA already brings education and employment partners together through its Aspiring Pathways programme.

That this Council believes:

- Every child and young person has talents and potential which deserve to be realised. Poverty, low ambition and other disadvantages often restrict the opportunity to develop them but should not determine a young person's future.
- That Rotherham should be a Child Centred Borough where the resources of the Council and its partners are harnessed to support every child to be the best they can.
- The educational disadvantage facing too many children has been visible for a generation. Repeated warnings have not been matched by sustained action at the scale required. This is an educational emergency and a systemic failure that demands practical action from national and local governments.
- Rotherham Children's progress depends on families, schools and communities being supported to work together. Families should be treated as partners with aspirations, and offered hands on help to navigate learning, choices and routes after 16.
- The Council cannot direct all schools, many of which are academies but it can use its convening role to bring schools, universities, colleges, families, employers and community organisations together and align support across education, early years, Family Hubs, health, skills and anti-poverty work.
- Success means more than monitoring gaps or examination results. It means providing practical help that improves learning, belonging, wellbeing, and seeing more young people confidently progress into further education, apprenticeships, higher education and secure

work.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Education, setting out that educational disadvantage has been documented over a generation but gaps persist and calling for sustained national action, long term investment and transparent reporting on progress, including action to address the effects of child poverty on learning and progression.

2. Ask Cabinet to make improving educational opportunity a delivery priority within the 'No Family Left Behind' Strategy, linking family poverty work with education, skills and post-16 progression and building on existing services rather than creating a separate strategy.

3. Request that OSMB review how the Council and its partners can improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people, with particular attention to barriers affecting boys and young men from lower income backgrounds. The review should examine available local attainment and higher education progression data by disadvantage, FSM eligibility, sex and ethnicity; consider whether national patterns among FSM-eligible White British boys are reflected in Rotherham; and assess the merits and feasibility of one or more local pilots to address underperformance.

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

89. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Councillor Thorp referenced the 12 October Cabinet meeting where he had asked about the £4.5 million ransom strip money from Worrygoose Lane. He stated that he had been promised documents detailing designs and pricings for a road safety scheme but had not received them.

Councillor Read asked Councillor Thorp to email him the specific details so that he could look into the matter further.

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 14 September and 12 October 2026 be received.

Mover: Councillor Read Seconder: Councillor Alam

90. AUDIT COMMITTEE

A correction to the Minutes was required to list Councillor Thorp as an attendee.

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

Mover: Councillor Baggaley Seconder: Councillor Ismail

91. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

92. LICENSING BOARD AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Garnett Seconder: Councillor Steele

93. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Mault Seconder: Councillor Jackson

94. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Clarke Seconder: Councillor Harper

95. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were no questions to designated spokespersons.

96. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 22 questions:

1. Councillor Thorp: I was talking with someone from RMBC ground maintenance at the Swinton roundabout who explained that the 2 roundabouts are cut weekly with no traffic management even though there is a 45 degree slope onto the road, could you tell me why these 2 roundabouts are so different to the likes of Worrygoose roundabout

that has no slope?

Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Communities, explained that maintenance arrangements for roundabouts were determined through site-specific risk assessments that considered factors such as traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, road layouts, visibility and risk control measures. It was noted that Worrygoose Roundabout had been assessed as presenting a higher level of risk due to its location within a largely dual carriageway network with higher traffic volumes and speeds, whereas Swinton Roundabout had been assessed as lower risk and could be maintained using specialist equipment designed for steep slopes. Councillor Allen offered to arrange further discussions with appropriate Street Scene officers to provide more detailed information on the risk assessments and maintenance requirements for specific roundabouts.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp welcomed the offer of further discussion and raised concerns about the cost and frequency of maintenance on roundabouts. It was noted that the roundabout was cut only a limited number of times each year and that additional funding had been required to undertake further maintenance. He stated that the costs of maintaining the roundabout were significant and suggested that alternative approaches could be explored. Councillor Thorp emphasised the importance of maintaining the appearance of Swinton roundabout and expressed a desire to ensure that current standards were not reduced.

Councillor Allen welcomed any suggestions on how the Council could improve.

2. Councillor Bacon: Persistent littering, ASB, and Flytipping continue on the A57. When will the Council finally implement a PSPO on the Aston & Todwick A57 and work with stakeholders to crack down on racing and ASB?

Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, explained that, as Councillor Bacon was already aware, the Council had considered this as an option, including officers attending a public meeting organized by the MP. However, it was not seen that a PSPO would add anything to the enforcement powers which already existed across agencies. The Council therefore had no current plans to introduce a PSPO in the area to deal with nuisance vehicles. It would, however, keep the matter under review. Should information, and reports, demonstrate that a PSPO could be beneficial to tackle problems on the A57, then officers would again consider the feasibility of introducing a PSPO.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bacon challenged the suggestion that policy decisions should be influenced by a public meeting with the

Member of Parliament and expressed concern about ongoing anti-social behaviour across Aston, Todwick, Dinnington and surrounding areas in the south of the Borough. He asked whether the Council would consider appointing a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour Officer for the southern area, similar to arrangements operating elsewhere in the Borough.

Councillor Alam stated that there were already dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour Officers working across the borough and he encouraged Councillor Bacon to raise his concerns at his local CAP meeting.

3. Councillor Baggaley: Following the opening of Waverley Medical centre will the cabinet member work with residents and wards members to support a pharmacy opening?

   Councillor Baker-Rogers, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, stated that this was something everyone would like to see happen, although it depended on receiving agreement from NHS England. Reference was made to the opening of a new GP practice in June 2026, increasing local demand for pharmacy services, together with ongoing housing growth and employment development in the area. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Council would continue to work with NHS partners to progress discussions regarding the provision of an additional community pharmacy for local residents.

   In his supplementary, Councillor Baggaley expressed the need to act quickly on this matter.

   Councillor Baker-Rogers asked Councillor Baggaley to email her outside of this meeting to continue discussions.

4. Councillor Bower: Under what circumstances would the council withdraw its support for the reopening of Doncaster/Sheffield airport?

   Councillor Read, Leader, reaffirmed the Council's support for the reopening of Doncaster Sheffield Airport, describing it as an important asset for the sub-region, a driver of economic growth and a project that enjoyed significant public support. The Leader noted that recent agreement between Doncaster Council and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority had identified a route to reopening the airport within available funding resources, helping to reduce risk to the taxpayer and providing the best opportunity for the airport's future success.

   In his supplementary, Councillor Bower stated that there were three possible outcomes for the airport. It could succeed, it could fail for the same reasons it did before or it could struggle on with the problems it had before, requiring more tax payer money to be invested due to the political capital involved. He asked if Rotherham Council had set any

red lines to say when enough was enough.

Councillor Read advised that the proposed funding arrangements were intended to ensure that public investment remained below the overall value of the airport site, thereby allowing public funds to be recovered should the project ultimately fail. He explained that this approach provided a degree of protection for taxpayers because the public sector would retain ownership of the asset. The Leader noted that future decisions on investment would remain subject to political consideration but emphasised that investment in major strategic assets was necessary if the region was to secure long-term economic growth and avoid missed opportunities.

5. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: With community skips becoming increasingly unaffordable for local budgets is there any extra support being considered to help housing officers support tenants struggling to maintain homes and gardens?

   Councillor Cusworth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, acknowledged concerns regarding rising skip hire costs and the resulting pressure on ward budgets. It was explained that community skips were intended as occasional community initiatives rather than a regular waste disposal service for tenants. Members were advised that Council properties were cleared to an acceptable standard before new tenants moved in, although there was no dedicated service for removing accumulated household or garden waste between community skip events. Support could, however, be considered on a case-by-case basis, with housing officers able to assist residents and signpost them to available services, including the bulky waste collection service.

   Councillor Cusworth noted that increased skip costs reflected wider rises in fuel, disposal and operating costs and confirmed that the Waste Service was reviewing the position with a view to developing arrangements that could help stabilise costs. It was also acknowledged that clarification was needed regarding skip charging arrangements to ensure there were no unexpected additional charges for users. Members were advised that officers were working to address the issue, although a solution was unlikely to be immediate.

   In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester emphasised that community skips were not simply one-off waste collection events but also supported wider neighbourhood work. It was noted that skips were used to engage with residents, identify individuals requiring assistance with garden maintenance and promote services such as the bulky waste collection scheme. He highlighted the high uptake of such initiatives within the ward and expressed concern about delays to bulky waste collections. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked that consideration be given to additional support for Council tenants,

particularly those with limited access to private transport, and requested that information on available waste disposal options and arrangements for personal skips and chargebacks be made clearer.

Councillor Cusworth agreed to arrange a meeting with relevant Cabinet Members and officers to discuss options.

6. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: With the welcome news of a £100 energy payment in the budget what lessons have we learned from previous such schemes to ensure residents without access to traditional banking receive the full amount without a pawnbrokers cut?

   Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, explained that the Council were currently await the formal guidance from Government in order to clearly set out how it would approach delivery of the payments. It was likely that the approach to delivering payments would utilise a number of options, such as potentially paying residents via;

   - Direct Debit where the council holds the details of the bill payer.
   - BACs transfers – following collecting banking details via an online form.
   - Vouchers that can be redeemed at Post Offices.
   - Cheques.
   - Crediting Council Tax Accounts with refunds provided if the account is in credit.
   - Or in exceptional circumstances making cash payments, this would only be used later in the process when other avenues have been exhausted.

   The guidance would allow the Council to assess what the best suite of options was and how best to operationally delivery the scheme to ensure residents received the payment as intended, as quickly as physically possible.

   In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester referred to previous support schemes delivered by the Council and highlighted concerns that residents on low incomes or in the most deprived communities could face barriers in accessing payments if an application process was required. He stressed the importance of ensuring that support reached those most in need, requested a Member briefing on the delivery arrangements, and called for targeted communication and monitoring to maximise uptake among vulnerable households and residents in deprived neighbourhoods.

Councillor Alam agreed that it was important to ensure vulnerable residents received information about the proposed support payments, particularly in light of ongoing cost of living pressures. It was noted that approximately 115,000 households in Council Tax Bands A to D could be eligible for support, representing funding of around £11.5 million. He confirmed that officers would consider how best to ensure the payments reached eligible residents and that appropriate arrangements would be put in place to maximise uptake among those most in need.

7. Councillor Jones: Can you please explain the process used by the town centre enforcement team for issuing of fines and how you believe it may impact residents visiting Rotherham who may have seen bad publicity?

   Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, explained that the Council's approach to enforcement in the town centre was evidence-led, proportionate and focused on maintaining a safe, clean and welcoming environment for residents, visitors and businesses. Fixed Penalty Notices were only issued where an authorised officer has either witnessed an offence being committed or had sufficient evidence available to demonstrate that an offence had occurred.

   In his supplementary, Councillor Jones raised concerns about what was perceived as an inconsistent approach to enforcement in the town centre. Reference was made to an incident during an RBL Poppy Launch event where a racially motivated comment was directed at the officiating padre, with no apparent action taken by security staff. In contrast, Councillor Jones highlighted a case in which an 83-year-old partially sighted resident had received a fixed penalty notice after unintentionally dropping a small piece of plastic litter. He asked for an explanation of the differing responses to the two incidents.

   Councillor Alam stated that any racist abuse should be reported to the police. He would raise the cases referenced by Councillor Jones with officers outside of the meeting.

8. Councillor Jones: Can you please explain what level of input highways safety officers have into planning applications and if they ever contest information supplied by applicants?

   Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, explained that, yes, the service did challenge developers as part of the planning process and worked alongside colleagues to place conditions on the planning application if needed to ensure the highway was not unduly affected by the development. Highways Development Management worked with the Planning Team

to provide advice on all applications that impacted the highway. This meant that all applications were considered, not just the more obvious larger ones.

In his supplementary, Councillor Jones queried why a planning application had been approved despite an earlier application for access at the same junction in 1989 having been refused on highway safety grounds due to poor visibility. He highlighted that traffic volumes on the adjoining road had increased significantly since that time, resulting in congestion and a number of serious accidents, and expressed concern that these issues had not been reflected in the applicant's road safety assessment. The woodland affecting visibility at the junction had also become denser since the original refusal and Councillor Jones questioned how these factors had been taken into account in reaching the decision.

Councillor Williams stated that he did not know the specifics about this particular application and asked Councillor Jones to email him after the meeting so that the matter could be addressed with officers.

9. Councillor Tinsley: Following changes to the waste operator's pricing model, community skips have become unaffordable for most wards. What alternative options have been explored to ensure this well-utilised scheme can continue, given its important role in helping wards keep our local area clean?

   As Councillor Tinsley was not present to ask his question, a written response would be provided.

10. Councillor Tinsley: Could the bulky waste collection service be further subsidised in our ward through Councillors' Community Leadership Funds (CLF) as a cost-effective alternative to community skips which may also encourage people to use it in future?

    As Councillor Tinsley was not present to ask his question, a written response would be provided.

11. Councillor Jones: Can you please explain the process for the borough council transferring land to another, either by sale or lease and what the average time it takes to accomplish most transfers?

    Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety, explained that the Council was able to dispose of land and property interests either by freehold sale or by the grant of a lease, licence or other property interest, subject to compliance with the Council's Constitution, Scheme of Delegation and relevant statutory requirements.

As a general guide:

- Simple lease transactions could often complete within 2 to 6 months.
- Straightforward freehold sales could typically complete within 3 to 9 months.
- More complex transactions involving development land, multiple stakeholders, legal title issues, planning matters or external funding requirements could take 12 months or longer.

Accordingly, the Council did not operate to a standard average completion period, as the duration was largely determined by the complexity of the individual transaction and the actions required from all parties involved.

In his supplementary, Councillor Jones expressed concern that local residents had only become aware that a parcel of land regularly used by dog walkers and forming part of the published Kimberworth and Rotherham Round Walk had been transferred to another land owner when a planning application was submitted to deposit approximately 60,000 cubic metres of material, re-contour the site and create two large ponds. He questioned how the transfer of the land could have taken place without apparent public awareness or consultation and referred to reports that the transaction had been completed within a matter of weeks.

Councillor Alam confirmed that a written response would be provided.

12. Councillor Jones: Can you please explain where we are with the redevelopment of the old indoor marketplace and if any changes to the original plans have been made since it was presented to the IPSC two years ago?

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, acknowledged Councillor Jones' continued interest in the redevelopment of the market and provided an update on progress. It was noted that traders had relocated to the new Market Hall in July, that the new library was scheduled to open early in the new year, and that work was now entering the final phase involving the former indoor market building. He recognised that the project had taken a significant period of time and had caused disruption for traders, but stated that substantial physical improvements and regeneration of this part of the town centre were now becoming evident. Members were advised that recent engagement sessions had been held with traders and that, as the project progressed, consideration was being given to the most appropriate location for the permanent indoor market across the current Market Hall and the redeveloped former indoor market

building. He confirmed that engagement with traders would continue and that their views would be taken into account as future options were developed.

In his supplementary, Councillor Jones reported having been contacted by market traders who believed they had been presented with a choice either to remain permanently in what had originally been described as temporary market accommodation or to relocate into unfinished shell units within the redeveloped indoor market. He stated that these proposals appeared inconsistent with previous information presented to the Improving Places Select Commission and to the wider public, and sought clarification on the Council's intentions for the future operation and location of the indoor market.

Councillor Williams stated that he would be concerned if traders genuinely felt they had been presented with an ultimatum and emphasised that both he and the Leader had been actively engaged with traders in recent weeks. He confirmed that further engagement sessions would continue and that traders' views would be taken into account as options for the future of the market were considered.

He advised that, should a decision be taken for traders to remain in the current Market Hall, further investment would be made to improve the facility, including upgrades to heating, insulation and ventilation. Members were also informed that improvements to access arrangements were underway, including new entrances and enhanced pedestrian routes, with the opening of the new library expected to provide an additional route into the market.

It was further noted that support for traders had been extended through the continuation of rent-free arrangements and the waiving of communal charges for storage, electricity and utilities. The Cabinet Member reiterated the Council's commitment to ongoing engagement with traders and to considering their feedback when determining the future configuration of the indoor market.

13. Councillor Ball: Since June 2024, what action has the Council taken in response to any reports of Legionella contamination in social housing, including use of its Housing Act 2004 enforcement powers, and what assurance can the Cabinet Member give that any identified risks have been addressed?

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

14. Councillor Ball: What is the latest forecast overspend on the Waste and Home to School Transport budgets for 2026/27, what specific actions and timescales are in place to eliminate the overspends, and will further budget uplifts be required in the Medium-Term Financial

Strategy?

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

15. Councillor Jones: Leading up to Christmas, other than the lighting of the Christmas tree, can you please explain what measures the council have in place to raise the footfall in the town centre and how they are engaging businesses?

    Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, explained that the Christmas Lights Switch-on was the main event in the town centre over the festive period. However, a range of events were scheduled to take place at the new Market Hall throughout November and December, including workshops co-created with market traders. Activities would include bauble-making and wreath-making workshops, alongside visits from Santa's elves, the Grinch and Father Christmas. Live music performances would also be provided by Rotherham Music, helping to create a vibrant atmosphere and encourage increased footfall to the Market Hall as well as the wider town centre.

16. Councillor Tinsley: Following the protocol established from my previous question at council meeting back on 25 May 2022, where planning officers committed to raising defibrillator provision during pre-application discussions for major housing proposals: How many new housing estates in Rotherham have successfully had automated external defibrillators (AEDs) voluntarily funded, fitted, or approved by developers since that date?

    As Councillor Tinsley was not present to ask his question, a written response would be provided.

17. Councillor Ball: The Council's own Freedom of Information answer of 12 September shows taxi licences were granted to drivers who failed the safeguarding section of the knowledge test. Why is a test that demands 10 out of 10 on safeguarding being set aside?

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

18. Councillor Yasseen: Who would have thought I'd find an ally in the Chancellor? The Budget has committed £15 million over three years to support organisations such as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library and BookTrust. Will the Council now explore a targeted, place-based partnership to bring the Imagination Library to Rotherham's most deprived communities?

Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Waste Services, Leisure and Green Spaces, explained that many people would find themselves to be allies of the Chancellor. However, at present, further details of the Government's funding programme were awaited. Once available, the Council would review the eligibility criteria and delivery arrangements to determine whether there were opportunities that could support Rotherham's wider ambitions for literacy, reading and early years development. Until then, Councillor Marshall could add nothing more to her previous answer on this subject.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen welcomed the Government's funding announcement in support of literacy initiatives and expressed support for exploring opportunities such as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. She emphasised that interventions should not be viewed as an all-or-nothing approach and suggested that targeted, place-based initiatives could be developed to focus support on areas of greatest need. Drawing on examples from other councils, Councillor Yasseen encouraged the Council to consider aligning such programmes with local priorities and asked that an open approach be taken to exploring these opportunities.

Councillor Marshall welcomed opportunities to encourage children's reading and expressed support for initiatives that promoted literacy. She highlighted the success of the recent summer reading programme, noting that approximately 28,000 books had been issued or renewed during the six-week period, with 1,580 children participating and 1,103 attending the concluding celebration event at Magna. Councillor Marshall praised the event and extended an invitation for Councillor Yasseen to attend future celebrations.

19. Councillor Yasseen: Government's new advice asks households to be self-sufficient for three days, yet its research found only 13% feel prepared and 84% want more information. What Rotherham-specific advice and practical support will the Council provide, especially for vulnerable residents? Will it press Government to explain why this public campaign and clear guidance came only now, after many people were left unprepared?

    Councillor Read, Leader, advised that the Government's guidance on household preparedness reflected the evolving risks faced by communities and referenced recent incidents affecting food supply systems elsewhere in Europe. He explained that the Council had only recently begun receiving information through the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum and that work was underway to consider how best to respond locally. He noted that further work was required to identify how vulnerable residents could be supported, including through arrangements such as priority services registers. He confirmed that the Council would work with partner organisations to

develop appropriate guidance and support, ensuring residents were prepared and informed without causing unnecessary concern or alarm.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen noted that the Government's recent advice on household preparedness had caused concern among some residents. She referred to discussions previously held at a scrutiny meeting regarding access to food and water during emergencies and stated that these issues had been raised before the Government's announcement. Councillor Yasseen asked whether such arrangements formed part of the Council's local emergency plan and sought further information on the level of preparedness for supporting residents during disruptions to essential supplies.

Councillor Read advised that the Council worked with partner agencies to provide access to water when supply disruptions occurred and referred to the recent incident in Boston Castle Ward, during which officers had worked closely with Yorkshire Water to make water available to affected residents. He explained that, whilst there was no standalone water-specific emergency plan, arrangements were in place to respond to such incidents and provide support where required. The Leader agreed to seek further information on the matter and provide a more detailed response outside the meeting.

20. Councillor Tinsley: Can solar panels be fitted to the vertical side walls of residential properties under permitted development rights, without the need for planning permission? Given the increasing affordability of solar panels and plug-in solar kits, could clarification be provided on the rules and any restrictions that may apply?

    As Councillor Tinsley was not present to ask his question, a written response would be provided.

21. Councillor Yasseen: Working with residents & the Friends of Herringthorpe Playing Fields Group, I have sought a masterplan for Herringthorpe Playing Fields since time has began; two Cabinet Members have promised one. Despite repeated follow-up by the Neighbourhoods Team, Green Spaces has provided no update. When will the Council publish a clear timetable for starting work on the masterplan?

    Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Waste Services, Leisure and Green Spaces, explained that there was currently no timetable for developing a Masterplan for Herringthorpe Playing Fields.

    In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that it was very disappointing and she would pick the matter up outside of the meeting.

22. Councillor Yasseen: Does the Council believe its climate emergency declaration remains meaningful while the Government permits new North Sea gas production (£2 billion), what action will the Council take to challenge the governments continued fossil fuel expansion and making its own climate commitments redundant?

Councillor Allen, Cabinet Member for Communities, explained that the Council's declaration of a climate emergency remained meaningful and continued to provide an important framework for reducing carbon emissions and improving energy security and resilience across the Borough. She emphasised that achieving these objectives required action at both local and national levels and that the Council remained committed to delivering change within areas under its control and influence.

Councillor Allen acknowledged that gas would continue to form part of the United Kingdom's energy mix for the foreseeable future, whilst the transition to renewable energy sources continued to develop. She noted that the Council's latest Climate Emergency Annual Report had identified significant challenges in achieving the Council's net-zero ambitions, including the age and condition of buildings, the existing vehicle fleet and limitations in electricity grid capacity. Despite these challenges, she reaffirmed the Council's commitment to increasing sustainable local energy generation, improving energy efficiency, reducing reliance on gas and supporting the long-term transition away from fossil fuels.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen acknowledged the Council's commitment to addressing climate change but expressed concern that the climate emergency had not always been treated with the urgency that an emergency implied. She highlighted what was perceived as an inconsistency in approach, noting that some residents, including those living in deprived communities, could face enforcement action for putting rubbish in the wrong bin while climate targets at national and local levels remained unmet. Councillor Yasseen questioned whether this created an inequality in expectations and responsibilities and asked whether a more balanced approach could be adopted that focused less on penalising residents and more on supporting collective action to address climate change.

Councillor Allen stated that she was concerned about any inequalities, whether real or perceived, and recognised that perceptions could have a significant impact on residents. She advised that she was not aware of instances in Rotherham where residents had been fined for placing incorrect items in recycling bins and undertook to discuss the matter further with officers. Councillor Allen reaffirmed the Council's commitment to addressing climate change and confirmed that work would continue to reduce energy costs and improve affordability for

residents while progressing the Borough's environmental objectives.

97. URGENT ITEMS

The Mayor invited all Members to attend a festive gathering at the Town Hall on 9 December. Members were advised that the event would provide an opportunity to meet representatives from local communities and the Mayor's chosen charities, and would include a performance by a local school choir. The Mayor noted that attendees would have the option of supporting the Mayor's charities through voluntary donations or by contributing a new, unwrapped toy to the Toy Appeal. Members wishing to attend were asked to confirm their attendance through the Mayor's Office.

FIELD_SUMMARY

(a) **FIELD_ITEM_NUMBER**

(b) FIELD_ITEM_NUMBER