

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 3 June 2026

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Baggaley, Blackham, A. Carter, Harper, Keenan, McKiernan, Sutton, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Lelliott.

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

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

1. MINUTES OF MEETING WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2026 OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Reference was made by Councillor Blackham to page 19 of the agenda pack (page 15 of the minutes, paragraph 3), Minute Reference 146, which stated that it had been confirmed a review would be commissioned. It was noted that, on pages 25–26, the Chief Executive had outlined that there would be two reports, one relating to the library, its current state, and how the situation had arisen, and a second separate report, creating an apparent inconsistency.

It was suggested that the first paragraph be amended to include a cross-reference to the later section to clarify that two reports had been indicated, as otherwise it could be interpreted that only one report was intended.

For clarity, the Chief Executive confirmed that there would be two separate pieces of work: an investigation into the specifics of the markets and library project, and a review into the wider approach to delivering large regeneration projects. It was agreed that the record should reflect this distinction.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 6 May 2026 be approved as a true record subject to Minute Reference 146 being amended to reflect there would be two separate pieces of work: an investigation into the specifics of the markets and library project, and a review into the wider approach to delivering large regeneration projects.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

3. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

No questions were received.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no reasons to exclude the press or public.

5. RENTERS RIGHTS ACT POLICY CONSULTATION

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Beresford, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report explaining that the Renters Rights Act and associated statutory guidance was published in November 2025. This introduced significant changes to local authority enforcement powers, including expanded civil penalties, statutory starting points for financial penalties, and additional investigative powers.

It was noted that, as these powers fall outside the Regulators' Code, a revised Private Sector Enforcement Policy and civil penalty calculation mechanism was required. Approval would be sought from Cabinet to undertake a six-week consultation commencing in late June, in order to comply with national legislation and establish a transparent and evidence-based framework for applying civil penalties.

The importance of ensuring proportionate and robust enforcement against non-compliance was highlighted, alongside the need to maintain fairness for compliant landlords and to reflect local housing market conditions and enforcement priorities.

It was reported that, although the Act increased civil penalties to a maximum of £40,000 and introduced a two-penalty tier system (with a lower tier of £7,000), a local reduction factor of 46.6% was proposed to ensure proportionality and recoverability in the local context. Statutory starting points would be applied, with provision for a 15% early payment discount and officer discretion of up to 20% either way based on mitigating or aggravating factors, as detailed in the appendices.

It was noted that the policy would be subject to annual review and that landlords would retain the right to challenge civil penalties through the First-tier Tribunal. Subject to Cabinet approval, a further report outlining consultation outcomes and any revised policy would be presented in November 2026, with findings to be reported back to the Board.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions, with Councillor Blackham expressing concern that the six-week consultation period, while meeting the statutory minimum, coincided with the summer holidays when engagement might be reduced. It was noted that the proposals were complex, involving detailed information and multiple legislative references, raising concerns about achieving meaningful engagement within the timeframe.

Sam Barstow, Service Director for Community Safety and Street Scene, acknowledged the complexity and advised that consultation materials would be simplified, focusing on key principles rather than detailed financial calculations. He confirmed the six-week period met statutory

requirements and was considered sufficient, with prompt communication and reminders planned to support participation.

The Chair noted that similar concerns about summer consultations had been raised previously, suggesting these should take place before the holiday period or extend into September to maximise engagement. It was proposed that this concern be included in the Board's recommendations.

Councillor Tinsley raised concern over the lack of a clear consultation plan, noting that previous exercises, such as selective licensing, had struggled to secure meaningful engagement. Clarification was sought on how the Council would effectively engage private sector landlords, including methods to reach the sector, promote participation, and raise awareness of the Renters' Rights Act among those not yet informed.

It was acknowledged that, despite concerns about the consultation period, the Council was in a relatively strong position. The recent selective licensing consultation had generated a significant number of responses and established a substantial contact base, which would be used to inform and engage participants in the new consultation.

Concern was reiterated that reliance on existing data may not fully capture the wider private rented sector, particularly landlords not previously engaged with licensing schemes. In response, it was noted that earlier consultations and ongoing enforcement activity had brought the Council into contact with a broad range of landlords, alongside established links with landlord representative bodies, which would support further engagement.

It was also highlighted that the consultation and subsequent policy development provided an opportunity to educate and support landlords in meeting their responsibilities under the Renters' Rights Act, with the Council's approach focused on promoting compliance and using enforcement as a last resort where necessary.

Councillor Yasseen, building on earlier concerns about the consultation period, compared the proposal with the selective licensing consultation, which had covered only part of the borough yet had run for a longer period, including an extension. On this basis, the six-week consultation was considered insufficient, and support was expressed for this concern to be reflected in the Board's recommendations.

Support was also expressed for aspects of the Renters' Rights provisions, including a borough-wide approach, although concern remained regarding the Council's overall approach and timing.

Further clarification was sought on the proposed 46.6% reduction factor applied to civil penalties, with concern that it could significantly reduce fines even in serious cases, including those involving vulnerable individuals. Questions were raised about how fairness and proportionality

would be maintained, particularly in distinguishing between minor and major offences and between individual landlords and larger corporate operators.

In response, it was explained that the legislation already differentiated between minor and major offences through different penalty starting points, ensuring more serious breaches attracted higher fines. The proposed reduction factor reflected the difference between national and local rental levels and aimed to align penalties with local market conditions; it was emphasised that this remained subject to consultation.

It was further explained that discretion would be applied through mitigating and aggravating factors, enabling higher penalties in cases involving corporate landlords or large portfolios, while allowing reductions for less experienced landlords, such as those with a single property. This approach aimed to ensure penalties remained fair, proportionate, and responsive to individual circumstances.

Councillor Yasseen acknowledged that further detail would be considered through the consultation process and sought clarification on how the proposed reduction factor had been calculated, including how it would interact with any uplifts applied to different categories of landlord.

Further questions were raised regarding the baseline data informing the proposals. It was noted that, while selective licensing had provided some insight into property types and tenure, it did not present a complete picture. Concern was expressed that the report lacked a clear baseline of the private rented sector and clarification was sought on the data underpinning the Council's approach.

In response, it was confirmed that a comprehensive baseline was not currently available, although the Renters' Rights Act included provision for a national database intended to address this. It was also noted that implementation of the Act would be phased, with the private rented sector database expected in late 2026, which was anticipated to support the development of a more complete baseline at both borough and national level.

The Chair asked about the extent of benchmarking with neighbouring authorities on their approaches to civil penalties. It was confirmed that benchmarking had been undertaken as far as possible, although all authorities faced similar limitations due to the absence of a requirement for private rented sector landlord registration, which restricted comparable data.

It was noted that benchmarking would continue to develop alongside national changes, particularly as more reliable data became available. The Council was also reported to work closely with regional partners, sharing approaches to implementation and maintaining a collective commitment to collaboration to improve understanding and ensure

consistency where appropriate.

The Chair asked how the Council would ensure that vulnerable or underrepresented private tenants, particularly those with limited digital access, were made aware of the consultation. It was confirmed that the Council would not rely solely on digital engagement. Drawing on the Selective Licensing consultation, it was noted that some respondents had preferred written submissions, and arrangements had been made to support this.

Paper-based consultation materials would be made available in community venues, supported by ward councillors, community networks, and local organisations. Frontline services and partner agencies would also be used to engage vulnerable groups through day-to-day contact.

It was further noted that trusted community networks and leaders would help raise awareness, with tailored assistance provided where needed to support participation, including for those who were digitally excluded or unable to complete written responses independently.

The Chair asked how the Council would maximise engagement with private landlords, communities, and letting agencies during the consultation. It was advised that this would build on existing engagement channels, including established networks, landlord representative bodies, and community organisations. The Council's regular day-to-day contact with stakeholders across the sector would also be utilised, alongside trusted community networks, to support broad awareness and participation.

Councillor Harper asked about the Council's preparedness to enforce the new provisions, including whether sufficient staffing and resources were in place given the scale of change and the incomplete understanding of the private rented sector. Reference was also made to previous staffing arrangements between phases of selective licensing.

It was noted that the legislation represented a significant shift in regulation, requiring changes to working practices. The Council would receive approximately £149,000 in new burdens funding, supplemented by existing investment, including a Private Sector Housing Manager post. These resources were considered sufficient for initial implementation, including establishing policies and procedures, although some uncertainty remained regarding future enforcement demand as levels of non-compliance became clearer.

It was further noted that civil penalties, ring-fenced for reinvestment in enforcement activity, could provide additional funding over time, with ongoing monitoring of capacity and demand expected as implementation progressed.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Harper asked whether headcount

had increased to support the new responsibilities. It was confirmed that recruitment for a Private Sector Housing Manager was underway following the Council's March budget decision, with the application phase recently closed. Plans for the use of new burdens funding were also in development, including consideration of additional officer resources. It was emphasised that, despite the new requirements, the Council already had an established regulatory function for private sector housing, with experienced officers in place to support implementation and enforcement of the legislation.

The Chair asked how the new burdens funding of approximately £149,000 would be used, including whether it would support training or additional staffing.

It was advised that the funding would likely be used for a combination of purposes, with initial priority given to training officers on the requirements of the Renters' Rights Act and the practicalities of enforcement. It was further noted that decisions on allocation, including any additional staffing, would be developed in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member and colleagues across the organisation, and refined as implementation progressed and service demand became clearer.

Councillor Blackham asked whether specific legal advice had been obtained in relation to the policy and its drafting, particularly to support simplification and minimise potential challenge. It was confirmed that legal advice had been sought, with the report having undergone standard internal consultation, including review by legal and finance officers, before being presented to Cabinet. In a supplementary question Councillor Blackham sought clarification regarding the origin of the statutory starting points for civil penalties. In response, it was confirmed that these were derived from the legislation, supplemented by accompanying statutory guidance.

Councillor Yasseen raised concern about the sufficiency of the £149,000 new burdens funding and whether existing resources, particularly from selective licensing, would be used to support borough-wide implementation of the Renters' Rights provisions. It was confirmed that selective licensing income was legally ring-fenced and could only be used within designated areas and therefore could not subsidise wider enforcement activity. It was further explained that additional investment, including enforcement and engagement posts within selective licensing areas, had been agreed through the budget-setting process in response to consultation feedback. The Private Sector Housing Manager role was the only post with a broader remit linked to the Renters' Rights Act, funded through separate Council investment rather than selective licensing income.

Councillor Bacon raised broader concerns about the potential impact of the legislation on the private rented sector, noting it could increase pressure in an already competitive market. A question was asked about the level of discretion available in applying the proposed local reduction

factor, including whether alternative evidence or greater reductions could be considered, or if the legislation required the use of specific data such as that from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

It was confirmed that some discretion was available, but any adjustment would need to be supported by a robust evidence base. National data, including ONS figures, was cited as providing a reliable benchmark for the proposed reduction. It was emphasised that this was an initial position, with the consultation intended to invite feedback and alternative approaches. It was further explained that the Council aimed to implement the legislation in a balanced and proportionate way, addressing non-compliance while recognising the potential impact of significant penalties on housing supply. The approach would focus on supporting landlord compliance, with enforcement used where necessary.

In response to a follow-up, it was confirmed that the consultation would be a genuine and open process. While any changes would need to remain evidence-based and within legislative requirements, feedback from stakeholders could inform revisions to the reduction factor, with all responses considered in developing the final policy.

The Chair asked about resilience planning should enforcement volumes exceed expectations. It was advised that resilience existed within the Community Protection and Environmental Health function, supported by ongoing upskilling and multi-skilling of officers. Roles had evolved from being narrowly defined to more flexible, enabling officers to undertake a wider range of enforcement functions and respond in a more coordinated way. This approach was noted to improve the customer experience by reducing the need for multiple officers and allowing resources to be directed to areas of highest demand. It was further explained that any short-term increase in enforcement demand could be managed within existing capacity, while, over time, income from ring-fenced civil penalties could be reinvested to support additional resources if required.

The Chair asked how the Council would obtain intelligence on private landlords and identify non-compliant operators in the absence of a comprehensive database. It was acknowledged that this was a national challenge, with a private rented sector database not expected until late 2026. In the interim, the Council would rely on a multi-source approach, including information sharing across internal services such as council tax, benefits, and licensing, alongside collaboration with external partners including the police, fire service, health services, and voluntary organisations.

Tenant complaints would remain a key source of intelligence, supported by targeted work in higher-risk areas and information from selective licensing schemes. While the lack of a registration requirement presented challenges, it was emphasised that the new powers would enable the Council to respond effectively using available intelligence while preparing for the national database.

Councillor Yasseen questioned the timing of the equality analysis, noting it was scheduled to be completed after the consultation, and raised concern that it had not been undertaken earlier to inform the consultation design, drawing on lessons from previous processes such as selective licensing. In response, it was advised that the equality analysis would be conducted once the policy was finalised to ensure its full implications were assessed. However, it was noted that standard Council consultation processes already incorporated consideration of equality and accessibility from the outset, with assurance given that the consultation would be designed to be inclusive and accessible, supported by appropriate measures to enable participation from all groups.

Councillor Yasseen queried the climate impact assessment, noting it indicated no impact, despite the report referencing enforcement of the Decent Homes Standard, which would support emissions reduction and improved energy efficiency. Concern was raised over this apparent inconsistency, particularly in light of the Council's climate emergency declaration. In response, it was acknowledged that the Decent Homes Standard would contribute to carbon reduction and energy efficiency in the private rented sector. However, it was explained that these provisions were part of a later phase of the Renters' Rights Act, not expected until around 2030, and therefore had not been reflected in the current policy or appendices.

Councillor Blackham noted, for information, that Saville's recent review found a 14% drop in private rented properties in New York over the past two years, prompting consideration of the outlook for the next three years. It was stated that the council adopts a balanced approach to regulation, as set out in the policy, and this was provided as the response to Council.

The Chair asked what governance arrangements would ensure consistent decision-making and whether officers' use of discretionary powers would be recorded and monitored for fairness. It was confirmed this would be in place, with management oversight supporting officers and legal advice sought where necessary. Consistency would be monitored through key performance indicators and team data. The importance of sharing knowledge with neighbouring authorities was noted, given landlords often operate across multiple areas. Achieving both local and regional consistency was recognised as a priority, supported through regional enforcement networks, professional forums, and guidance from the Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers, with alignment to emerging national standards where possible.

The Chair asked what key risks might arise during the transition period when both the old and new policies could apply, and how these would be managed.

It was noted that the new policy incorporates previous Housing Act offences and will provide a single approach to housing enforcement once fully implemented, although risks during the interim period were

acknowledged. Officers would manage this through clear transitional arrangements and defined cut-off points, with a detailed implementation timeline to be set out following consultation and Cabinet approval. Clear communication with stakeholders was highlighted, alongside the importance of staff guidance and training to support consistency. Ongoing support from legal services would also ensure that the transition period was managed appropriately.

The Vice-Chair asked how the Council would balance supporting the viability of the private rented sector with protecting tenants from non-compliance, particularly given concerns about landlords exiting the market, and whether the impact of increased enforcement on housing supply would be monitored. It was noted that monitoring landlord exits would take place where information was available, though there is currently no accurate baseline. The planned national database is expected to provide a more reliable basis for future monitoring. It was confirmed that the policy sets out a proportionate and balanced enforcement approach, including local adjustments to reflect rental values. The consultation process was highlighted as key to gathering feedback on whether this balance is appropriate or requires adjustment.

The Chair asked what key performance indicators (KPIs) would be used to measure the success of the enforcement policy, including compliance rates, appeal outcomes, and tenant impacts.

It was confirmed that a balanced suite of indicators would be used at multiple levels within the service. Performance information would be reviewed across the management structure, including at Head of Service and Director level. KPIs would include compliance rates, reduction and prevalence of repeat offences, and outcomes of enforcement cases. Monitoring would also cover appeals and tribunal outcomes, including both successful Council cases and successful appeals by appellants. Tenant outcomes would be assessed, particularly in relation to improvements in housing conditions, safety, and quality. Timeliness would also be measured, including response times and end-to-end case durations. It was noted that this performance information would be available for scrutiny, which may take an ongoing interest in these measures.

Councillor Yasseen noted support for the recommendation but stated that six weeks was insufficient and should be extended. It was highlighted that the scope of the work and the size of the market were unclear, with significant unknowns, and that more time was required to complete the work thoroughly and fairly. Concern was raised that conducting the work over the six-week summer period, including August, would be ineffective due to reduced availability. It was further noted that the Council had previously agreed not to consult residents during holiday periods, and proceeding in this way would be inconsistent with that position.

The Chair asked what the latest consultation end date could be to enable the report to return to Cabinet in November, noting a reluctance to debate

the matter in Cabinet. In response, the Service Director for Community Safety and Street Scene advised that they could not provide an answer without further consideration, due to the risk of giving incorrect information. It was explained that the timing would need to take into account key factors, such as obtaining appropriate legal advice on the final draft of the policy, and that this would require consultation with legal colleagues to determine a suitable timeframe.

The Service Director for Community Safety and Street Scene further stated that extending the consultation period would be challenging while still being able to deliver a robust report that had been properly engaged across the organisation. While acknowledging that scrutiny could make its own recommendations, it was maintained that a six-week consultation complied with statutory requirements and expressed confidence that an effective consultation could be delivered within that period, enabling a legally sound decision by the Council.

A Member suggested that, given no action would occur until 27 April, consultation could run from September to November, allowing four months for completion. It was reiterated that the ambition remained to return the final policy to Cabinet in November and that further delay would be difficult, although it was acknowledged that previous reports had been delayed. Concern was expressed by the Board regarding consultation taking place during holiday periods, reflecting longstanding practice.

Members emphasised that determining consultation timeframes was the role of scrutiny and proposed recommending an extended consultation period running from September to mid-November, with the final report presented to Cabinet in December. It was noted that Cabinet may choose not to accept this recommendation, but the Committee's views would be formally put forward.

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

1. Approve consultation on the draft:
 - a. Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, derived from the Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers (ACEHO) National Model Enforcement Policy; and
 - b. Civil Penalty Calculation Mechanism, including local market adjustment.
2. Note that a future report with the outcome of the consultation and revised policy documents will be presented to Cabinet in November 2026.

Additional recommendations to Cabinet from OSMB were that:

3. That Cabinet extend the consultation period into September to provide an adequate timeframe for responses.

Further actions that arose from discussions were:

- That service report to OSMB prior to presentation of the final policy

to Cabinet, to demonstrate how feedback from the public consultation process has been incorporated into the final Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.

6. FINANCE UPDATE JUNE 2026

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Alam OBE, Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety introduced the report which provided Cabinet with an update on financial matters. It was presented as an interim update on the Council's 2025-26 financial outturn, ahead of a more detailed report scheduled for July 2026.

The Council's projected position improved from a £3.4 million overspend reported in December to £0.3 million. This £3.1 million improvement had previously been reported to Cabinet in February. Headline details of these improvements were included in the report. The directorate forecasts indicated a positive trajectory for the Council's finances. Strong financial management was noted as essential in addressing future budget pressures and external uncertainties.

The improved position meant that reserves remained stronger than originally projected when setting the budget, supporting the Council's overall financial standing during a period of economic uncertainty. Spending in line with the approved budget remained critical. Continued scrutiny of income and expenditure across all services, alongside robust budget monitoring, was identified as a priority to ensure delivery of annual and medium-term financial plans while maintaining financial resilience.

The Service Director, Financial Services, Rob Mahon noted the position was identified in the 2026-27 budget papers as under financial monitoring, with ongoing work with directors to reduce the overspend and align it with budget.

The December overspend was less than 1% of the Council's net revenue budget and not considered significant. Actions had further reduced it, strengthening the financial position. The Council was entering 2026-27 in a more robust position, as reflected in the approved budget and council tax report, though some underlying outturn challenges remain and would require further discussion. A detailed outturn report would be presented to Cabinet in July, and potentially to Scrutiny, providing early analysis of revenue and capital positions while year-end processes were finalised.

The Chair invited questions from OSMB, with Councillor Yasseen welcoming the reduced overspend and noting it as a significant improvement. Support for crisis measures in the budget was welcomed, including free school meal vouchers (c.141,000 rising to 142,000), £413,000 for energy support, household fuel assistance, £90,000 for care leavers, and council tax subsidies. Clarification was sought on continuation of this support into 2026.

It was confirmed that the 2025–26 Household Support Fund figures reflected final outturn delivery, including total vouchers issued, value of energy support, and households supported.

Councillor Yasseen commended the scale of delivery and improving financial trajectory but raised concern over £6.2m of service pressures, particularly in Children's Services, and sought assurance on further mitigating actions.

It was reiterated that there was no single solution to CYPS placement pressures. Actions had included reviewing placements and delivering prior savings, improving the position. The 2026–27 budget included a £2.8m uplift and £2m for inflation, though pressures were expected to exceed assumptions. Grant funding had provided additional support, but completion of savings plans remained critical, particularly the in-house residential programme (four placements across two properties in 2026–27) to reduce reliance on high-cost external provision.

Forecasting remained challenging due to demand volatility, but the position was considered manageable within 2026–27. While pressures persisted, many had been mitigated through the budget, with further work ongoing, including increased use of independent fostering. It was noted that pressures reflected a national trend, though benchmarking showed the Council performing comparatively well with an improving trajectory.

The Chair raised a question regarding lessons learned from the variance between the Quarter 3 forecast and the final position. It was noted that an improvement in the forecast position was typically observed in Quarter 4. Close working arrangements were in place with directorates across all levels of financial management to ensure forecasts were as accurate and transparent as possible throughout the year. However, it was acknowledged that forecasting remained challenging, and some movement in Quarter 4 was expected in both local authority and wider organisational contexts.

It was reported that efforts to minimise this variance had improved year on year, although further learning was ongoing. In particular, increased confidence in newer income streams was identified as an area for development. Reference was made to improved performance within country parks, where income targets had historically been difficult to achieve but were now being met due to service improvements.

A cautious approach to forecasting these income streams had been taken to ensure sustainability rather than short-term gains. This approach would continue into 2026–27, with a focus on confirming that income growth was stable and not solely driven by initial changes or new facilities. It was confirmed that finance teams would continue to work closely with services to strengthen forecasting accuracy.

A further point was raised regarding how the ongoing success and

sustainability of income generation at country parks would be ensured beyond any initial uplift. Andrew Bramidge, Executive Director, Regeneration and Environment noted that this also related to performance at Thrybergh. Strong income performance had been seen in the initial months at both Rother Valley and Thrybergh, with income at the Thrybergh café reported to have doubled following the opening of the new facility. This had provided increased confidence in income forecasts for the following year, although a cautious approach was being maintained to ensure that the uplift was sustainable rather than driven by an initial surge in demand. Ongoing monitoring throughout the year was confirmed, with it noted that confidence in income projections was higher than in previous years.

Councillor McKiernan asked whether the increase in the IT capital budget for data backup storage and hardware provisioning reflected inflationary pressures or an expansion in equipment. It was explained that the ICT capital reprofile reflected a combination of both inflationary pressures and updated service requirements. The reprofile aimed to present a more realistic assessment of what the service could deliver over the coming years. It was noted that the ICT capital programme had historically been flat-profiled, which often resulted in in-year adjustments, including slippage and savings. The ICT management team had taken a proactive approach in reviewing budgets, identifying achievable savings, and returning these to the wider capital programme. Overall, the revised profile was intended to better align investment with delivery capacity, while incorporating anticipated demand and inflation over the next three financial years.

In response to a follow up question, it was explained that the position reflected a combination of factors. ICT senior officers had undertaken a review of the Council's infrastructure needs and capacity, including engagement with services to understand current and future requirements. It was noted that there was an increasing shift towards cloud-based and externally hosted systems, reducing the need for some on-premises server infrastructure. However, server requirements continued to be assessed to ensure they aligned with service needs and supplier requirements. Overall, the approach reflected both evolving technology trends and a reassessment of what equipment was necessary to support the Council's ICT systems effectively.

A further question was raised regarding whether the shift from capital investment to subscription-based ICT services had resulted in increased revenue expenditure. It was confirmed that, while ICT contracts had experienced inflationary increases year on year, no additional pressure had been transferred into revenue budgets. It was also noted that the ICT capital programme had generated underspends through re-profiling and, over recent years, had returned savings to the capital contingency.

Councillor Baggaley requested a breakdown of the £2.4m improvement within CYPS and asked whether vacancies and turnover were impacting

service delivery. It was confirmed that vacancies were not adversely affecting services, with recruitment managed to avoid any detriment. Savings were largely attributable to normal staff turnover. It was explained that most of the £2.4m improvement related to grant maximisation, including the use of additional external funding aligned to government priorities. The remainder reflected smaller savings from staff turnover and vacancies, alongside anticipated placements that had not occurred later in the financial year.

The Chair asked whether the £5.7m directorate overspend, offset by a £5.4m underspend in central services, was sustainable. It was explained that a central contingency had been set in 2025-26 to support social care pressures and had not initially been allocated to CYPS to maintain focus on savings delivery and transformation. Following review during budget setting, assurance had been gained, and a proportion was redistributed in 2026-27, including £2.8m to CYPS and £2m for inflation. It was noted that central services would continue to hold budgets for inflation and risk to manage uncertainty, but delivering large underspends year on year was not intended. The 2026–27 approach reflected a shift towards allocating funding to directorates based on confidence in delivery and need.

Councillor McKiernan raised concern that £1m had been allocated for ash dieback mitigation, with only £21k spent, and sought clarification. The Executive Director, Regeneration and Environment explained that the funding had been set aside based on anticipated impact, which proved lower than expected over the past two years, with fewer affected trees. It was noted that other tree diseases had since emerged, and the original allocation had been too specific; a broader provision would have been more appropriate.

Clarification was sought on whether a clear plan was now in place to utilise the allocated funding, particularly in relation to tree replacement and wider planting initiatives. It was confirmed that a more structured approach had been introduced, including a systematic programme of tree inspections. This proactive regime would identify trees requiring removal or replacement, ensuring that funding was directed appropriately. It was noted that this level of planned inspection and management had not been in place previously.

The Chair raised concerns about the risk of demand for the LCTS top-up scheme exceeding the £1.7m-£1.9m budget and how its impact on financial hardship would be measured. It was explained that a reserve, largely funded through the Crisis Resilience Fund, had been identified to support the scheme. While demand could exceed the budget due to its demand-led nature, the risk was considered low, although cost-of-living pressures could increase uptake in line with the scheme's purpose. It was noted that the reserve was expected to support the scheme over three years within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, though use in 2026-27 could reduce sustainability in later years, potentially requiring alternative funding. This risk was acknowledged but not considered likely at this

stage. The scheme was described as means-tested and open year-round to support a wide range of residents experiencing hardship. Monitoring arrangements were in place, with data reported across the Council, and further enhancements were being developed to improve understanding of impacts and target support effectively.

Councillor Yasseen raised a query regarding the Public Health underspend used to offset Adult Social Care pressures and its potential impact on prevention and health inequalities, particularly in the context of ICB changes.

It was noted that further detail would be provided in the July outturn report to Cabinet, with Directorate representation to address the issue in depth. It was confirmed that the underspend was relatively small and not expected to significantly impact public health outcomes. Ongoing work was also noted to review arrangements with the ICB and maximise the use of increased Public Health grant funding in 2025-26 and 2026-27.

The Chair raised a question regarding how anticipated changes in legislation, particularly in relation to electric vehicle infrastructure, would be accounted for in future projects. It was acknowledged that predicting changes in national policy remained challenging. While local policy could be more readily planned for, national legislative changes could arise during the lifecycle of projects and impact both capital and revenue budgets. It was explained that such risks were considered as part of project and budget risk management, with policy changes included within risk registers for both major and minor capital schemes, as well as within revenue planning processes. However, it was noted that some changes could not be fully anticipated. Reference was made to the electric vehicle infrastructure project as an example, where policy changes during a delivery period of approximately five to six years had required additional works that were not originally planned. It was also noted that, due to earlier budget pressures, elements such as car parks at Rother Valley had been value engineered out of the scheme but later reinstated as a result of subsequent policy changes.

Councillor Baggaley asked whether the flood resilience funding was new or additional. It was confirmed that the funding related to an existing programme established following previous flooding, with schemes delivered in phases by the drainage team. Costs had exceeded initial estimates following detailed assessment, reflecting a needs-led approach. The funding was already included in the Council's budget and did not represent additional resource. It was clarified that, while the works would not fully prevent future flooding, they were intended to improve property resilience and reduce impact, with delivery ongoing.

The Chair asked about the Council's resilience to current global economic and market pressures. It was reported that the Council was in a robust position to manage external challenges. While global factors continued to present difficulties for budget and treasury management, these were not unprecedented, and the Council had successfully managed similar

pressures in recent years, including COVID-19, high inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, and wider geopolitical events. It was noted that this reflected strong financial management, supported by a robust budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, alongside maintained and strengthened reserves. Overall, confidence was expressed that the Council was well placed to manage ongoing economic uncertainty.

Councillor Baggaley queried the outstanding R&E variance, including route optimisation, the contamination pilot, and responsible waste grants, and sought a progress update. It was confirmed that the main element of route optimisation, the service restructure, had been completed and delivered the primary savings. However, routes had not yet operated for a full financial year, and late 2025-26 operational challenges had impacted delivery. It was reported that performance was nearing stabilisation, with further work continuing into 2026-27 to fully realise planned savings, including route optimisation and removal of two routes. Progress had been made, but delivery was not yet complete and would be closely monitored.

It was confirmed that, if full delivery was not achieved, updates would be provided to Cabinet with alternative options. An update on the contamination pilot and responsible waste grants would be provided separately.

Councillor Baggaley queried the extent to which treasury underspends were due to delays in capital programme delivery and whether this reflected deferred work. It was explained that around £2.5m of the underspend related to capital slippage, which, while not desirable, was common. The Council adopted a prudent approach by providing revenue cover at approval stage, creating in-year flexibility where slippage occurred and resulting in central underspends. It was emphasised that, while this supported the overall position, the priority remained timely delivery of the capital programme in line with strategic objectives.

Councillor Bacon asked whether the capital programme variations set out in section 2.4 included the recently approved changes relating to the Markets and Libraries project. It was confirmed that these variations were not included in section 2.4, as they had already been reported to and approved by Cabinet. As a result, those changes had already been incorporated into the Council's capital programme and were not reflected again within that section.

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

1. Note the update on the revenue budget financial outturn 2025/26.
2. Note the Council's progress on the delivery of the Local Council Tax Support Top Up payment scheme.

3. Note the update to the Household Support Fund for 2025-26.
4. Approve the capital budget variations as detailed in section 2.4 of the report.

7. MENOPAUSE REVIEW

The Chair and Members received a Spotlight Review on Menopause presented by Councillor Keenan on behalf of the Health Select Commission. Although originally commissioned as a workshop, the high level of engagement demonstrated the importance of the issue and the need for action; it was therefore progressed as a formal review to ensure contributions informed meaningful change.

The review identified menopause as a significant public health issue for Rotherham. Evidence indicated that up to 113,000 residents would experience symptoms during their lifetime, with around 35,000 experiencing severe impacts on daily life. These effects extended beyond physical health to mental wellbeing, family relationships and economic participation, affecting individuals, households, workplaces and communities across the borough.

It was consistently reported that awareness remained low and that information, advice and guidance were inconsistent and fragmented. As a result, many individuals did not recognise symptoms or know where to seek support, leading to delays and avoidable distress. Experiences of primary care varied, with inconsistencies in diagnosis, advice and treatment, and the link between menopause and mental health was not always recognised or addressed. Gaps in community provision and outreach were identified, particularly for underserved groups, alongside the importance of peer support. In the workplace, stigma and limited support were reported, with some individuals leaving employment. While examples of good practice were noted, activity was not yet sufficiently coordinated, consistent or visible to address the impacts of menopause and perimenopause.

The Commission developed recommendations to improve awareness, strengthen primary care, integrate mental health support, expand community provision and support employers. It also highlighted the need for stronger system leadership through a coordinated multi-agency approach, with the ambition of establishing Rotherham as a menopause-friendly borough.

The proposals aligned with the Council Plan by supporting residents to live well, promoting stability for children and young people, and contributing to an inclusive economy by reducing barriers to employment. The intended impact was both individual and systemic, improving quality of life while strengthening communities and economic resilience. Members were advised to note that a reference to paragraph 5 should instead refer to the recommendations section of the report.

The report was presented as a practical roadmap for change, reflecting the experiences of residents and partner commitment, and setting out how coordinated leadership and sustained effort could improve understanding and support for menopause. The report was commended to the Board.

The Governance Advisor, Kerry Grinsill-Clinton, endorsed the comments made by Councillor Keenan and formally noted sincere appreciation for the strong engagement from partners, including the voluntary and community sector, in the preparation of the report.

Councillor Yasseen expressed thanks to the Chair of the Health Select Commission for the significant work undertaken, noting that it remained an area requiring further attention. It was highlighted that women's health continued to be overlooked, and that the focus on aspects of older women's health was overdue. The report was welcomed; however, concern was raised regarding the limited ability of the review process to drive action, beyond setting out the case. It was suggested that greater urgency was needed in responding to the findings, and consideration was sought as to whether the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board could add value and provide additional support to help progress the outcomes identified in the report.

The Chair clarified that the report would be considered by Cabinet and Full Council, providing an opportunity for further influence. Thanks were extended to the Health Select Commission for its work, noting that the review demonstrated the effectiveness of scrutiny. It was emphasised that appropriate representation at Cabinet should be ensured so that the Board's views were clearly conveyed, and that Members should also represent these views when the matter was considered at Full Council.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) endorsed the following recommendations:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) noted the report.
2. That the recommendations listed below as approved by Health Select Commission, be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and response

Public Awareness and Information, Including Engaging Men and Young People:

- a) That the Council seeks to improve public awareness of perimenopause and menopause through:
 - i) The establishment of a single, well-promoted online menopause resource on the RotherHive or another appropriate online medium, supported by printed information that can be accessed via relevant community settings accessible to the digitally

- excluded.
- ii) That bespoke targeted content aimed at men, young people and employers is included in that resource to ensure a holistic and borough wide approach to raising awareness.
 - iii) That the Council works with education providers including schools and colleges to ensure that young people receive age-appropriate advice and guidance regarding the effects of the menopause and how to seek support if they or their loved ones are affected.

Primary Care Improvement:

- b) That the Council seeks to support Primary Care Improvement in relation to perimenopause and menopause through:
 - i) Encouraging the adoption of a 'Menopause Champion' in every GP Practice in Rotherham and sharing information regarding GPs Menopause Champions once achieved.
 - ii) Encouraging, via the 'Menopause Champion' GP network and in conjunction with the NHS Healthcare in the Community Agenda, Development of the Town Centre Health Hub and through collaborative work with TRFT, RDaSH and South Yorkshire ICB, the establishment of a clear and consistent menopause pathway, including consistent assessment tools and referral guidance.
 - iii) Encouraging, through the 'Menopause Champion' GP network and collaborative work with TRFT, RDaSH and South Yorkshire ICB, the expansion of GP and practice staff training through Protected Learning Time and online modules to further support service delivery, consistency and capability to provide perimenopause and menopause care in Primary Care settings.

Mental Health Support:

- c) That the Council seeks to improve Mental Health Support during perimenopause and menopause by:
 - iv) Encouraging health partners, including GPs to embed menopause screening questions within Talking Therapies and other mental health pathways.
 - v) Increase the visibility of mental health support options within all menopause information, advice and guidance materials.

Community Support and Engagement:

- d) That the Council seeks to improve Community Support and Engagement during perimenopause and menopause by:
 - i) Working with relevant Council Services, Health Partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector to expand menopause cafés and community information sessions across more venues.
 - ii) Working with relevant Council Services, Health Partners and

the Voluntary and Community Sector to further develop outreach support to minority ethnic communities, faith groups and groups with language barriers.

Workplace Health:

- e) That the Council seeks to improve Workplace Health in the context of perimenopause and menopause by:
 - i) Producing and promoting a bespoke 'Rotherham Menopause Workplace Toolkit' setting out best practice, reasonable adjustments and support options for adoption by the Council and which can in be shared with employers across the borough to support 'menopause positivity', creating space for open conversations and contributing to reducing the number of women affected by perimenopause and menopause who leave the workforce.
 - ii) Promoting workplace 'Menopause Champions' in local organisations and businesses, starting with RMBC as an exemplar employer

System Leadership:

- f) That the Council seeks to improve System Leadership in the context of perimenopause and menopause by:
 - i) Utilising the connectivity of the Rotherham Women's Health Network to support the drive for better perimenopause and menopause awareness and care across the borough.
 - ii) Inviting partners who work with the Council as part of the Health and Wellbeing Board and Safer Rotherham partners, who comprise of some of the borough's largest employers, to adopt workplace 'Menopause Champions' and to support a broader agenda of working towards making Rotherham a 'Menopause Friendly Borough'.
 - iii) Developing a shared multi-agency action plan with measurable outcomes in support of that aim, including considering inclusion of improvements in menopause information, advice and support in the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
 - iv) Working with relevant Council Services, Health Partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector to explore opportunities to secure sustainable long-term funding for menopause initiatives across Rotherham Place.
3. Following submission to Cabinet, that those recommendations within the control and influence of external bodies, are shared with relevant health partners and commissioners for consideration and response.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Governance Manager presented the Work Programme for 2026–27 for consideration.

An update was provided on the review into lighting columns - Cut unnecessary red tape. It was noted that the review group would be meeting later that day to consider policies of other authorities, the Council's interim position, and the results of a survey of parish councils.

The survey had opened on 28 May and was due to close on 30 June. As of the previous afternoon, 18 responses had been received, comprising 10 from parish clerks, 3 from chairs or vice-chairs, and 5 from parish councillors. Responses would continue to be monitored and analysed following closure, with findings to be reported back to the review group.

Councillor Baggaley queried whether a date had been set for the Children's Takeover Challenge, noting the importance of scheduling it in advance, particularly to ensure Cabinet Members were able to attend. The Governance Manager reported that work was ongoing with relevant officers regarding the Children's Takeover Challenge. It was noted that the event was being planned for September; however, a topic for scrutiny had not yet been confirmed. Further engagement would take place to progress this and to secure a suitable date. It was indicated that the event would most likely take place on a Wednesday evening to align with the usual Youth Cabinet meeting arrangements, with a typical start time of 5.00 pm.

The Chair advised that all Elected Members had been invited to submit suggestions for the work programme, with a deadline of the following Friday, 12 June 2026, for responses. It was noted that submitted ideas would be reviewed by the Chair and Vice-Chair against agreed criteria and a prioritisation matrix, with the Board making final decisions on those to be progressed. Select Commissions would also be able to engage with officers on appropriate next steps where relevant. Members were reminded to submit any suggestions by the deadline and to copy relevant officers to ensure they were recorded.

Councillor Baggaley sought an update on the item relating to street bin collections scheduled for June/July. It was reported that officers were currently collating the required information following previous discussions, with an update to be circulated to Members in due course. Councillor Baggaley emphasised the importance of the item being considered prior to the summer period, highlighting the need for timely progress.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be approved.

9. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

Update from Health Select Commission:

This update was noted as presented within the agenda pack.

Update from Improving Lives Select Commission:

This update was noted as presented within the agenda pack.

Update from Improving Places Select Commission:

This update was noted as presented within the agenda pack.

10. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Chair presented the Forward Plan of key decisions, noting that several items were on the agenda. It was proposed that the Health Hub Phase 2 item would not be considered as this was due to be considered by the Health Select Commission in September 2026. It was also proposed to remove the Children and Young People Services School Capital Programme item.

It was noted that the three finance reports would be included on the agenda as separate items but would be considered collectively as a single item, with questions taken across all three as required. Members noted that limited discussion was expected on the financial monitoring report due to the short reporting period.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed that the following items would be added to the July agenda as part of OSMB's pre-decision scrutiny work:

- Council Plan 2025 - 2028 & New Year Ahead Delivery Plan - Pre-decision
- Leader Q&A - to be scheduled after Council plan on the agenda.
- Financial Outturn 2025-26 - Pre-decision scrutiny
- Treasury Management Outturn 2025-26 - Pre-decision scrutiny
- Financial Monitoring for May - Pre-decision scrutiny
- Draft Street Trading Policy – Pre-decision scrutiny

11. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair noted that no meetings had taken place since the last update. However, further meetings had been scheduled for June.

12. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

13. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.