

**COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Wednesday, 5th December, 2018**

Present:- The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Alan Buckley) (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Albiston, Allcock, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Bird, Brookes, Carter, Cooksey, Cowles, Cusworth, B. Cutts, Elliot, M. Elliott, R. Elliott, Fenwick-Green, Hoddinott, Ireland, Jarvis, Jepson, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Mallinder, Marles, Marriott, Napper, Price, Read, Reeder, Russell, Sansome, Sheppard, Short, Simpson, Steele, Taylor, Tweed, Vjestica, Walsh, Watson, Williams, Whysall and Wyatt.

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

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

**100. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor was pleased to present his activity since the last Council meeting which was attached for information to the Mayor's letter.

The Mayor also referred to Councillor Lyndsay Pitchley suffering a stroke and, on behalf of the Council, passed on the very best of wishes for a speedy recovery.

**101. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clark, D. Cutts, Ellis, Evans, Hague, Pitchley, Roche, Rushforth, Senior, John Turner, Julie Turner, Wilson and Yasseen.

**102. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no communications received.

**103. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**

**Resolved:-** That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2018, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

**104. PETITIONS**

The Mayor reported receipt of a petition, which had not met the threshold for consideration by Council, and would be referred to the relevant directorate for a response to be prepared:-

- From 235 residents calling on the Council to consider reducing the speed of traffic from the current 40 mph to 30 mph on the stretch of Doncaster Road between Fosters Garage and Thrybergh Country Park.

Mr. Taylor addressed the Council as part of the presentation of the petition.

**105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Albiston declared a personal interest in Minute No. 116 (Council Motion – HS2) and chose to leave the room and not observe the vote.

**106. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

(1) Mr. Jackson asked did the Council accept, that any reduction in the amount of green waste composted due to the changes in refuse collection, would be a failure of the Council's waste policy, and incur unnecessary cost and create a situation of more home composting/garden fires for vulnerable benefits groups.

Councillor Hoddinott did not believe that there would be a failure of the Council's waste policy. Whilst the Council had no way of knowing how much garden waste was composted in people's gardens, home composting was the most environmentally friendly way of disposing of garden waste so where it was safe to do so that was to be encouraged. The Council currently had home compost bins on offer at a reduced cost.

Equally there was no evidence from the rest of the country that charging increased the number of garden fires. The Cabinet Member reminded everyone that most Councils in the country have already introduced charges for green waste before Rotherham.

The Cabinet Member had spoken to Mr. Jackson before about the economics of garden waste. As well as collection costs, the disposal of the garden waste that was collected from residents incurred a cost. The Council paid a contractor to treat the waste, which was the case in all other local Authorities. Any proposal to process garden waste and sell the compost that was produced assumed that there was a profit to be made from the process. This was not the case. The cost of processing the waste would hugely outstrip any potential income that could be made.

In a supplementary question Mr. Jackson referred to the Council collecting or making less compost through not have a full collection system. He, therefore, presented some further information to the Mayor which would explain in full and give a glimpse for the future.

The Mayor assured Mr. Jackson he would read the information he had been presented with.

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed, however, that 32,000 households have now signed up for the new garden waste service and so would receive all year round garden waste collections.

That was nearly one in three of all the properties in the borough.

Even if the weight of garden waste coming through the Council's collections reduced, and it may not do, overall it was expected that the full programme of changes that were being introduced would increase the amount of waste recycled in total, and at the same time save the Council about half a million pounds a year.

Officers have offered to meet to discuss this further and this offer still stood to Mr. Jackson.

(2) "T" was unable to attend today's meeting so the question would be answered in writing.

(3) Mr. D. Smith was unable to attend today's meeting so the question would be answered in writing.

(4) Mr. Sylvester welcomed the news that Members would be reporting to Council on the work they were doing under the potentially excellent neighbourhood working strategy but asked what procedures would be in place to ensure the reports were robust, factual and relevant to the communities they served?

Councillor Watson confirmed part of the role of neighbourhood working and the new neighbourhoods strategy was to improve both the communications and engagement with residents; connecting and shaping Council services at a neighbourhood level.

Each ward had a ward plan that captured locally identified priorities and the activities and projects that would be reported back to Council would illustrate just some of the ways as to how those priorities were being tackled and, therefore, relevant to those particular communities. These were on the Council's website and if they were not factual or robust then the local residents involved would certainly be challenging their accuracy.

At each Council meeting from now on Councillors from three different wards would report back on the work they were undertaking with their local residents, community groups and partner organisations.

In a supplementary question Mr. Sylvester referred to the potential excellent neighbourhood working across the borough which was far better than the work in the previous Area Assemblies. In Scrutiny many of the potential problems were identified regarding devolved budgets and cross area working. There were good examples of where it was working well and Wingfield had been identified as incredibly good with Councillors from different parties working together. There were some issues with some of the Ward Plans. The one for Silverwood Ward indicated that Councillors would attend Thrybergh Parish Council as part of the consultation, but only Councillor Napper had attended. Looking at the Ward Plan for East

Herringthorpe no consultation had taken place other than residents complaining. Mr. Sylvester, therefore, asked if there could be anything written in where the Ward Plans could be challenged or questioned through scrutiny for any comments or recommended change.

Councillor Watson confirmed residents could telephone, email or attend a surgery with their Ward Councillor and he was aware that Improving Places Select Commission would monitor the Strategy.

Today was the first attempt at the Ward Plans being presented to Council and feedback was welcome on how things could be done better. He hoped that next year's Annual Report that would be presented to Improving Places would prove to be an excellent neighbourhood working strategy.

**107. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved:-** That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, that should the Mayor deem if necessary the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that any items involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.

**108. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council wished to say a few words in relation to the story covered initially in The Times newspaper last week, and subsequently in other media. He spoke for everyone in this chamber whose hearts went out to those involved in the story. Many had met Sammy Woodhouse personally, and held her in the highest of respect. Clearly her experiences in the family court have been traumatic, and that was a cause of real sorrow to all. It was not possible to comment on the specifics of Sammy's case. Family Courts were held in private and revealing information about individual cases could result in contempt of court. The privacy of the child in the case was also paramount.

The issue centred around part of the family court proceedings and whether parents who did not have parental responsibility must legally be informed about certain legal proceedings in the family courts involving their children.

Social workers must listen to and act in the best interests of the child at all times and the Leader was confident that staff have followed the national rules correctly. Social workers have not tried to use the family courts to give convicted violent criminals access to any children, or to arrange custody for perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.

As the Local Government Association said in their statement last week: "Councils are absolutely committed to making sure the welfare and wellbeing of the child is paramount in decisions about their care.

However while these are complex issues, councils have to operate within the existing legal framework at all times."

Some commentators last week suggested that social workers should choose when to follow the law just as a matter of "common sense".

Had, in Rotherham, during government intervention, a social worker decided that the law did not need to apply, the Council would have been dealing with an entirely different and legitimate set of concerns.

The Leader wanted to be clear that elected politicians did not direct individual safeguarding and family court cases. Those who have argued that politicising these processes further were, in his opinion, gravely mistaken.

None of this changed the heartache from recent days, but it did not mean that the national rules were right.

Rotherham's priority remained working to safeguard vulnerable children within the borough. Contact with the Ministry of Justice had continued over the last week and the potential issues around current practice directions in England and Wales were being treated with the gravity and urgency that they required.

An announcement from the Ministry of Justice was awaited on their next steps and support had been reiterated to participate along with other Council's in any considerations of the guidance that may be proposed.

The Ministry of Justice have confirmed that their previous statements regarding 'failings' were given prior to a review of the case, and they were now considering potential issues with practice directions in England and Wales. They have said there was no suggestion Rotherham Council had operated outside of the current practice guidelines.

Of course, any clarification did not help victims and survivors affected by current guidance, and Rotherham was committed to working constructively with victims, survivors and the Ministry of Justice on the important issues raised.

The Leader was proud of all the progress made in Rotherham over the last four years and during the last week it felt like steps had been taken backwards.

Rotherham was in a different place to what it was in 2014. Not just because the Commissioner intervention was brought to an early conclusion, or because Children's Services recovered its "Good" Ofsted

rating faster than anywhere else in the country had. Looking at the Council agenda today, this was a better Council than the one visited by Alexis Jay.

This would not mean that things would not go wrong and that everything was done right, but the Council would act with integrity in putting it right.

The measure of a person was not how they fell down, but how they got up. This was not the moment to turn inwards, but to continue to do better and to be better.

The Mayor invited Councillors to ask questions or make comments on the statement by the Leader.

Councillor Cusworth reiterated, as the Leader had already suggested, this was not the place for the chamber to discuss individual cases, but expressed how difficult this was and could not imagine what women of Rotherham and survivors endured. She was amazed at the strength and bravery demonstrated in helping to bring perpetrators to justice. The matter brought to the Council's attention in the media was of serious concern and was assured Rotherham followed the national rules correctly.

At Improving Lives Select Commission yesterday Christine Cassell from the Local Children's Safeguarding Board attended and reinforced how amazing the transformation of Rotherham had been and unprecedented. If the Leader was in agreement the Improving Lives would like to explore the possibility of a piece of work looking at this process further down the line.

The Leader was amenable within the legal boundaries for Scrutiny to look into a piece of work on these proceedings.

**109. MINUTES OF THE CABINET**

**Resolved:-** That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2018, be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Watson

**110. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - CONSULTATION ON THE ADOPTION OF SCHEDULE 3 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1982 AND A ROTHERHAM SEX ESTABLISHMENT LICENSING POLICY**

Further to Minute No. 62 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 consideration was given to the report which sought approval to commence public consultation on the adoption of the Schedule, which would give local communities a greater say about the presence of sex establishments, including sex entertainment venues, sex shops and sex cinemas. This would allow the Council to more effectively

regulate such premises through a formal Sex Establishment Licensing Policy.

It was also intended to develop a draft policy, including proposals relating to the type of locations and number of sex establishments, and to seek views on that draft policy. Whilst this would potential aid a consultation, as it would give consultees a draft set of locations and a suggested number of sex establishments to consider, it could potentially limit the range of sensitive localities being identified, and limit the range of responses in relation to the number of sex establishments in particular locations and likely to elicit a more comprehensive range of views about sensitive localities and the appropriate number of sex establishments within those localities.

Councillor Keenan was in support of the report and deplored an industry where human beings were treated as commodities and booked or sold and this consultation gave everyone the opportunity to express their views. Children had the right to move around the borough and attend churches and schools whilst not having to encounter such establishments. Rotherham, despite what it referred to in the media, was a decent wholesome town and this consultation allowed people to make views heard and make the town a safer place.

Councillor Steele supported the report and thanked Councillor Hoddinott and the officers for protecting the interests of those who worked in this industry and welcomed the equality impact assessment.

Councillor Carter supported the policy and the proposals to regulate the industry, safeguard rights of the workers and ensure rights of all individuals were safeguarded. He supported the consultation with regards to sex establishments in Rotherham.

Councillor Cusworth was also in support of the report.

**Resolved:-** (1) That the proposal to adopt Schedule 3 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (as amended) be considered, and the commencement of public consultation in relation to the proposed adoption be approved.

(2) That, in line with Option 2(b) (Section 4), a proposed draft Sex Establishment Licensing Policy, to run parallel to consultation on the adoption of Schedule 3 above, be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Hoddinott

Seconder:- Councillor Beaumont

**111. RECOMMENDATION FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, consideration was given to the term of office of the

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current Independent Member serving on the Audit Committee which was due to cease on 9th December, 2018.

The appointment of an Independent Member of the Audit Committee was a function of the Council and the Audit Committee were recommending that Mr. Bernard Coleman be re-appointed as the Independent Member of the Audit Committee for a twelve-month term of office until 31st December, 2019.

**Resolved:-** That Mr. Bernard Coleman be re-appointed as the Independent Member of the Audit Committee with a term of office ending on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019.

Mover:- Councillor Wyatt

Seconder:- Councillor Walsh

### 112. **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS - AUDIT COMMITTEE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE OF SHEFFIELD CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY**

Consideration was given to the following nominations as substitute members on the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee of the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority:-

- Audit Committee Councillor Bob Walsh
- Scrutiny Committee Councillor Jeanette Mallinder

Resolved:- That the appointments as substitute members be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Lelliott

### 113. **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE**

Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, provided an update on the latest work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Select Commissions - Health, Improving Lives and Improving Places over the last few months.

This was the second update for 2018-19 of the work undertaken by Scrutiny during the last few months and good progress was being made with the planned programme and as always additional items have been scrutinised, including multi-agency working in complex abuse investigations and homelessness prevention.

An initial session with Voluntary Action Rotherham went well and led to members of Rotherham Parent Carers Forum contributing to the scrutiny of child and adolescent mental health, bringing their perspective as parents and service users.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had been busy with budget scrutiny looking at proposals for the next two years as well as close monitoring of the in-year position.

The Health Select Commission was monitoring progress on more integrated working in health and social care and on the social, emotional and mental health agenda.

Improving Lives Select Commission focused on the next phase of early help and the sufficiency strategy for looked after children, as well as having a positive meeting with the young inspectors

Improving Places Select Commission had largely focused on housing and neighbourhood strategies, in addition to finalising the joint review with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on modern methods of construction.

The Chair wished to pass on his thanks to all scrutiny members for their hard work.

**Resolved:-** That the report be received and the contents noted.

Mover:- Councillor Steele

Seconder:- Councillor Cowles

**114. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS**

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward Updates for Wales, Wath and Wickersley as part of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy.

The Strategy signalled a new way of working for the Council both for Members and for staff and covered every ward in the borough and would be delivered through ward plans developed with residents to address local issues and opportunities. Ward Members would be supported by the neighbourhood team and would work with officers and residents from a range of organisations to respond to residents.

Councillor Read, on behalf of the Wickersley Ward, gave an update on ward priorities, which were based on proposals from an extensive residents' survey with emphasis on young people. The Ward was able to join up estate regeneration within Flanderwell Park and with funding from the Housing Revenue Account with Ward Members' own delegated budget the unsafe play area was developed with young people engaged on the design.

In addition, sessions were also arranged to engage some extra youth work to engage young people in diversion activities at certain times of the year.

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Speeding came through in the survey much more and certainly work had taken place on Brook Lane and on the road between Bramley and Ravenfield to try and get speed reduced. Reference was also made to litter and a number of schemes like community clean ups had been undertaken. Good progress had been made, but this was plenty more challenges within this process which would be taken forward.

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed a lot of work had been taken place and reported on other activities such as the work on Markfield Drive with physical improvements to the estate and she thanked Councillor Beck for his support. The community centre was now back up and running regular coffee morning and craft workshops which sat alongside the surgeries and the annual Christmas singalong which would take place in the next few days. One of the highlights was the school council elections at Flanderwell School and the environmental projects they were undertaking.

The community speed watch on Brook Lane would be established as a regular occurrence with the local police and a further one would take place with Bramley Sunnyside School in the new year.

There were still many challenges with anti-social behaviour and criminal damage and a plea was made for residents to work with Ward Members to pass on information and look at solutions. Solar lighting had been purchased and erected on footpaths to deter criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. In last few weeks the Police had also been visiting houses to talk to families who were causing a nuisance.

Councillor Beck, on behalf of the Wales Ward, confirmed a key priority had been community safety and engaging vulnerable parts of the community.

Key projects had also been undertaken with local schools, raising environmental awareness of litter and making sure people took greater responsibility for keeping areas clean.

Ward Members also worked with agencies, neighbourhood watch and youth groups with a community safety event in September, 2017 engaging residents with advice and equipment to help them feel safer in their homes.

A piece of work on Alders Way had also taken place following the congregation of youths in a dark alley way which was resolved with the erection of a solar powered lamp-post to illuminate the alley way resolving a particular problem for residents in the area.

A community safety initiative on Peregrine Way, Harthill highlighted the need for keeping elderly homes safe and a number of safety devices were fitted to homes free of charge.

Flagship projects over the last year had been the Wales High School pedestrian safety scheme involving work with local neighbours, residents and the school for safer pedestrianised areas and widened footways.

Billy and Belinda Bollards, following on from other success in the borough, were also erected at some primary schools. These bollards were designed to look like small young children to assist with slowing down traffic. It was the intention for these to be erected outside all primary schools in the ward this financial year.

Ward Members were committed to taking forward serious issues whilst also making it fun for the people involved.

Councillor Atkin, on behalf of the Wath Ward, referred to neighbourhood working activity at the flagship community facility, run by local people, Montgomery Hall.

The three Ward Councillors along with other Council colleagues in areas such as Housing, Libraries, Streetpride, Green Spaces and the Police worked effectively together successfully, along with various sports clubs and volunteers. Wath Rugby Club's achievement was also being recognised and they had been invited by the Mayor to the Town Hall.

Volunteers played an important role in the community and a cross ward litter picking group had been formed with the Hooper Ward. Ward Councillors had provided litter pick equipment. The group were hoping to fill their 3000<sup>th</sup> bag by Christmas.

Lynn Cadman was singled out for her volunteering efforts with turning Montgomery Hall into a thriving and well managed asset. It was thanks to her that the Hall provided a much needed community facility being used by the community most days.

Special recognition also needed to be given to Lucy Reeder, Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, shared with Swinton. Ward Members were concerned they were to lose her support, but lobbied officers to ensure her work could continue and that her work in the ward was recognised.

Councillor Elliot spoke positively about Wath Gala and the Christmas Festival which was becoming increasingly popular in the community supported by local businesses. These events provided opportunities for local charities and small businesses along with the community in engaging together and empowering volunteers. Events such as these created a better community and it was so humbling and proud to see members of the ward volunteer their time to move forward with things they wanted to do. Wath was a great place to live and was improving all the time.

Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, welcomed the opportunity for these ward reports to be considered

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by Council and for what worked and did not work to be shared. As indicated by a member of the public it was not felt appropriate for these reports to be considered by Scrutiny.

Resolved:- That the ward updates be received and the contents noted.

### **115. NOTICE OF MOTION - SCHOOL TRANSPORT CHARTER**

Proposed by Councillor Steele and seconded by Councillor Lelliott:-

This Council supports:-

- the work of the Rotherham Youth Cabinet and their Counterparts a cross South Yorkshire in developing the South Yorkshire Transport Charter.

This Council recognises:-

- that the Charter will improve accessibility and safer transport and travel across South Yorkshire for all young people. The charter sets out the principles for all partners and also the responsibilities for children and young people themselves as transport users.

This Council resolves:-

- to thank the young people in Rotherham for their contribution to developing the charter following work undertaken in takeover day with Scrutiny.

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

### **116. NOTICE OF MOTION - HS2**

Proposed by Councillor R. Elliott and seconded by Councillor M. Elliott:-

This Council notes:-

- the recent developments and disclosures about the out of control and spiralling costs of HS2
- the need for improved links throughout the region to Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Hull.
- the ravaging impact of austerity on social services and the urgent need to increase spending on children and young people, adult social care and education.

This Council resolves:-

- to call on the Government to cancel the HS2 project immediately, thus saving Rotherham, South Yorkshire and the Nation from an unmitigated economic and environmental disaster.

- to call on the Government to allocate the funding released from cancellation for use to boost local infrastructure and social spending
- to call on local MPs and the Mayor of the Sheffield City Region to support the Council and our communities by lobbying for the cancellation of the HS2 project.

Councillor Lelliott proposed and Councillor Watson seconded the following amendment:-

**To replace**

That this Council resolves to:-

- call on the Government to cancel the HS2 project immediately, thus saving Rotherham, South Yorkshire and the Nation from an unmitigated economic and environmental disaster.
- call on the Government to allocate the funding released from cancellation for use to boost local infrastructure and social spending.
- call on local MPs and the Mayor of the Sheffield City Region to support the Council and our communities by lobbying for the cancellation of the HS2 project.

**And insert**

This Council resolves:-

- to call on the Government to abandon the Leeds leg of the HS2 project immediately, thus saving Rotherham and South Yorkshire from the significant adverse environmental impact which will result.
- to call on the Government to allocate the funding released from the abandonment of the Leeds leg to boost essential improvements to local transport infrastructure and the Northern Powerhouse.
- to call on local MPs and the Mayor of the Sheffield City Region to support the Council and our communities by lobbying for the abandonment of the Leeds leg of the HS2 project.
- to continue to raise the concerns of local residents that affected by the amended route of HS2, and the disruption that will be caused during its construction."

On being put to the vote the amendment to the motion was put and won and became the substantive motion.

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

**117. PLANNING BOARD**

**Resolved:-** That the reports, recommendation and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Sheppard

Seconder:- Councillor Williams

**118. LICENSING**

**Resolved:-** That the reports, recommendation and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee and Licensing Board Sub-Committee be adopted.

Mover:- Councillor Beaumont

Seconder:- Councillor McNeely

**119. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS**

**(1) Councillor Carter** asked was he able to know the full final legal bill – including detriment costs – following the outcome of the Judicial Review into the unlawful duty system, Close Proximity Crewing in South Yorkshire?

Councillor Atkin confirmed the issue was raised at the meeting of the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority on 26th November. The position was explained to the Members of the Authority that the claims have been settled, in principle, subject to the individual claimants being consulted by their legal advisers and trade union representatives.

Only once it had been clarified that the proposed terms had been agreed by the individual claimants the full details of the compensation agreed would be reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

In terms of the financial implications of the costs of the judgement, which would include the compensation as well as the costs of the revised IRMP, these were being addressed within the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked would South Yorkshire Fire Authority be increasing the Council Tax precept to the maximum amount to help cover the cost of the detriment payments.

Councillor Atkin confirmed there were no plans to increase the cost to cover the detriment payments, but the Fire Authority would be setting the budget under the normal process.

**(2) Councillor Carter** asked what were SYFR's reserves balance at the time CPC was rolled out?

Councillor Atkin confirmed Lowedges and Aston Park Fire Stations went live with CPC at the end of 2014. At this time, the Authority's earmarked

and general reserves were around £25 million. Reserves could only be spent once and were not a realistic or viable way of paying for long term, revenue spending such as staff pay.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked would the Fire Authority be dipping into reserves to cover the detriment payments and/or increase the provision of fire cover as determined by this Council in the motion to the Fire Authority earlier this year given there was £25 million in the pot and did he agree there were now funds to enable this to happen.

Councillor Atkin reiterated reserves could only be spent once and were not a realistic or viable way of paying for long term, revenue spending such as staff pay. £17 million had already been committed to essential capital investment. None of these measures would have been necessary had it not been for the austerity and budget cuts enforced by the Coalition Party during 2010-2015.

**120. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN**

**(1) Councillor B. Cutts** formally withdrew this question.

**(2) Councillor Brookes** referred to the recent care proceedings case which had provoked a clear and strong moral reaction from all. Victims and their families should be protected from their rapists. The law notwithstanding, did the Deputy Leader agree that the Council was doing all it could to support staff to raise concerns and question practice over potential harm and ethical issues?

Councillor Watson confirmed the protection of individuals, whether children or adults, was central to social work practice. Practitioners worked hard to ensure that vulnerabilities and risks were understood and taken into account within the work that they did. It was important that staff worked within national guidance and statutory procedures to ensure that the complex nature of their work was set within national practice and had adherence to practice across the country.

By implementing Restorative Practice and Reflective Supervision social workers were encouraged to raise concerns and escalate challenges to their line managers in order to achieve the best outcomes for their children and young people. The Council would work hard to ensure that social workers and team managers have time for reflective discussion and where appropriate escalate concerns about case work to more senior managers. The Council were working hard to continue to promote the culture of learning throughout the service where workers were encouraged to be curious, raise concerns and reflect on what actions were required for each individual situation.

In a supplementary question Councillor Brookes was pleased to hear about the ongoing journey and the culture of learning and understood the Council had operated in the guidelines and asked if, with more foresight

and with more questions being asked, there may have been a different outcome and perhaps a different one going forward for similar cases that may arise.

Councillor Watson confirmed it was impossible to talk about individual cases, but he was confident that workers did what was required by law and advised of them. Going forward any changes that may happen or be suggested Rotherham's staff should not be in a position where they were unable to follow the law.

**(3) Councillor Carter** asked how many other rape victims who have had children consequently have had their rapists contacted about parental responsibility?

Councillor Watson thought it would be helpful to clarify parental responsibility – this was a legal term outlined in the Children Act 1989. It set out the rights, duties and responsibilities that a parent had in relation to their child. When issuing care proceedings the Council was required to contact all persons with parental responsibility and any person who the Council believed to be a parent without parental responsibility.

Family care proceedings were held in private in order to protect children and, therefore, the Council could not provide information on specific situations including the circumstances in which children were conceived.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked given that a number had not been provided how many rape victims have been contacted in this way.

Councillor Watson pointed out as reported in the news following Sammy's story there were certainly other cases in other parts of the country involving biological fathers who have been convicted of violent offences who have been legally entitled to certain parental rights. Whilst he could not comment on what may or may not have happened here, when Councils were all following the same rules, it was inconceivable that there have not been other similar cases nation-wide.

**(4) Councillor Carter** asked who sanctioned whether or not a rapist was contacted by RMBC to be involved in their child's care?

Councillor Watson explained when the Council issued care proceedings to safeguard a child, it was required to give notice of those proceedings, by law to any person holding parental responsibility for that child and/or any person the Council believed was a parent of any child who was a subject of those proceedings. A parent with parental responsibility by law would automatically become a party to care proceedings. It was for the Court to decide whether a parent without parental responsibility should become a party to the proceedings.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked when was the Deputy Leader made aware of this being taken forward of rapists being contacted in terms of the Children's Act.

Councillor Watson explained that these requirements in law were operational matters and not strategic. He did not believe Lead Members would be asked to comment on specific cases moving forward as it would be expected that staff acted within the law within their profession.

**(5) Councillor Carter** asked what representations had RMBC made to the Ministry of Justice to clarify guidance on contacting rapists about parental responsibility?

Councillor Watson confirmed the Council had been in continued contact with the Ministry of Justice since the articles in the press last week and was confident that the serious matters raised regarding the current practice directions in England and Wales were being treated with the gravity and urgency that they required.

An announcement was currently awaited from the Ministry of Justice on their next steps and the Council have re-iterated support to engage with them in their actions on this matter. The Council were very happy to work with them on what might be considered a suitable way of dealing with cases like this in the future.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked was this the first contact relating to these guidelines with the Ministry of Justice in the aftermath of the press stories.

Councillor Watson confirmed the first contact would have been last week. However, Rotherham had its own Legal Team that knew how the law worked so you would not expect the Council every time a Social Worker had to take a decision to ring up the Ministry of Justice to see if they agreed with the action being taken.

**(6) Councillor Carter** asked what representations had RMBC made to try and change the law about contacting rapists about parental responsibility?

Councillor Watson explained the Council had requested, along with many others, that the Ministry of Justice undertake a review of practice guidance and support had been offered to such a national review as it was felt Rotherham had experience in this field.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked when did those first representations happen.

Councillor Watson referred to the answer above and confirmed the first contact would have been last week.

**(7) Councillor Short** asked had the Council signed a non-disclosure agreement with HS2 Rail Link?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed a Service Level and Non-Disclosure Agreement with HS2 was signed by the Council on 13th July, 2017.

The Council had signed it because without signing it, HS2 would not provide information to the Council and, therefore, the Council's ability to represent local communities would be impaired.

In a supplementary question Councillor Short was disappointed, but not surprised that twenty-six Councils, including North Yorkshire, had signed these agreements. The perception by the public were these agreements were gagging orders to keep residents in the dark to prevent them from mounting campaigns against building HS2. It was a perception and not in public interest at all, but only that of HS2. By signing the agreement it would appear the Council was not supporting the residents it claimed to be supporting. The Council was saying it was against HS2, but quietly had signed a legal agreement.

Councillor Lelliott wished to clarify the position. Perception was not always fact and true. Signing the agreement meant that HS2 could share information with the Council in advance of it becoming public and for the Council to respond to proposals. Without this the Council would not be able to make representations on behalf of the Council and on the people it represented. Signing of the agreement was a necessity to ensure the Council was kept informed of developments.

**(8) Councillor Cowles** asked if the position could be clarified on the Cross Keys and No. 28 Moorgate Street with regard to their current NDLR tax status and did this result in a cost to the tax payer, if so, how much was the taxpayer percentage contribution and what had been the taxpayer cost to-date?

Councillor Alam confirmed the Open Minds Theatre Company (OMTC) took the tenancy of the both properties from 30th September, 2016 and they received 80% mandatory Charitable Non-Domestic Rates relief on them both.

They had been liable to pay the remaining 20% of the Non Domestic Rates from the tenancy start date.

Legislation required the cost (loss of income) of the 80% mandatory relief to be shared in the following proportions:-

- 50% Central Government.
- 49% RMBC.
- 1% Fire Service.

Reduced business rates income to the Council in relation to the Cross Keys, Moorgate Street from 30th September, 2016 to 31st March, 2019 was £3,188.74.

Reduced business rates income to the Council in relation to 28 Moorgate Street, as a result of the 80% mandatory relief from 30th September 2016 to 31st March 2019, was £1,292.50.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles understood the properties were being used for storage and resource. However, he had never seen anyone taking stuff in or out. Furthermore, a notice had been posted indicating an asbestos problem and realistically people should not be disturbing this material. He asked if the Council could investigate what was going on with these buildings, how much was being stored, if the charity was making best use of its funds, taxpayers money and storage utilisation.

Councillor Alam confirmed that the charity had given assurances that they were using these buildings for storage and the legal position was that if they were using the building for occupation then they were entitled to relief.

**(9) Councillor Cowles** referred in a recent communications release concerning Eastwood properties. The officer referring to the properties described them as “two rat infested homes”, PR 21562, their words not his and he asked did this clearly indicate the failure of the Eastwood Deal and Selective Licensing?

Councillor Beck confirmed no, but that it showed that if the Council had followed Councillor Cowles’ advice and that of the opposition party and not introduced selective licensing, the residents in those properties would still be living in rat infested houses.

Instead, because of the policy the Council introduced, the landlord was facing criminal charges, an unsafe property had been closed, and the tenants were living in suitable accommodation. He would always defend that the Eastwood Deal and selective licensing were a success.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles believed this indicated the initiatives had failed. Selective licensing did not give the Council any powers it did not already have. It merely transferred cost and raised rents as a result. If this was success then he would not like to see failure. The press release went on to cover rat infestations, gardens full of rubbish and a further house with a rodent problem. All these issues had been raised by himself previously. The Eastwood Deal had been in place at whatever cost, the local MP had visited recently and a rodent had run out in front of her. She commented that you would not get rid of the problem until the waste was removed. Rodents did migrate and on occasions when Councillor Cowles had walked at the back of the Town Hall he had seen rodents as there was waste food all over the place. The problem was

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becoming widespread. The emails he had referred to previously in the summer highlighting this problem had also been sent to the Cabinet Member responsible so she could not deny that she was not aware of the rodent problem. He asked when would the Council tackle the problem with some urgency.

Councillor Beck confirmed Eastwood did have its challenges, but good progress was being made. Crime and anti-social behaviour was falling in Eastwood and standards was rising which could be evidenced. More people were playing a part in that area of the town. When properties were first inspected in Eastwood more than 90% did not meet legal requirements. Now over 94% met the standard expected. The Council would continue to work to bring about improvements.

**(10) Councillor Napper** asked what steps was RMBC taking with regards to complaints against the Customer Service Department?

The Leader did not specifically know what Councillor Napper had in mind. However, the formal complaints procedure was managed outside of the Customer Services Department.

This year there had been a total of 36 formal complaints received regarding Customer Services since 1st April, 2018.

44% (11 out of 25) of complaints for Customer Services were upheld or partially upheld since 1st April, 2018. Any further specific issues the Leader was happy to pick those up.

In a supplementary question Councillor Napper referred to a visit to the Town Hall last week where he was asked by the Chair of the Northern Housing Panel if any people had complained to him about Customer Services. He found this quite alarming with the number of complaints that the problem was not being dealt with.

The Leader reiterated the invitation to pick up these matters after the meeting.

**(11) Councillor Napper** asked did RMBC employ a Housing Fraud Officer?

Councillor Beck confirmed the Council did not employ a specific Housing Fraud Officer, but the Housing Service did have a number of checks in place for the detection and prevention of fraud. For example, all Right to Buy applications were put through a series of checks by officers working in the Right to Buy and Leasehold Service to ensure fraudulent applications were not made. When processing applications officers would include proof of ID and proof of residency and carry out anti money laundering checks.

In respect of tenancy fraud officers working in the Housing and Estate Management Service carried out a rolling programme of tenancy audits/verification checks by visiting tenants in their home and asking a series of questions to confirm who was living in the property and the details of the household corresponded with the tenancy. Such visits and enquiries helped investigate any allegations of non-occupation or subletting of Council tenancies.

**(12) Councillor Jepson** asked what was the future of the Chesterfield Canal Steering Group given that there have been no meetings held since April of this year. He had contacted the Assistant Director for Culture, Sports and Tourism some eight weeks ago on this matter and was still waiting for a reply.

Councillor Allen confirmed a reply with an explanation and an apology had been forwarded onto Councillor Jepson. The next meeting of the Steering Group was scheduled for the 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2019.

In a supplementary comment Councillor Jepson was hopeful the meeting would take place as it had been nine months since the last one.

**(13) Councillor Carter** asked what progress had been made since the last full Council meeting in regards to ending period poverty in our secondary schools?

Councillor Watson confirmed all schools and academies have a delegated budget which included an amount allocated to address health, safety and welfare issues. As part of this arrangement, secondary schools routinely held a stock of female sanitary products in first aid/medical rooms and designated facilities for the use of pupils where needed.

What appeared to be a problem for some pupils was their inability to ask for help. It was, therefore, proposed that an approach be made to the secondary heads at their meeting next week where the Deputy Leader was to speak to them about the principle of having somewhere in school a stock of products without pupils having to ask.

There was also a national project called the "Red Box Project", which placed red boxes in supermarkets in the same way as food banks so that members of the public could donate products so they could be put into schools and be readily available. An appointment had been made with the Chair of the "Red Box Project" to consider such a scheme in Rotherham to which Councillor Carter would be invited. There was a local scheme, however, and the details would be shared once contact had been made.

This was an issue as austerity continued to bite for families on very limited incomes that would have to make the choice about food, heating or sanitary protection. This was a serious issue that needed to be taken forward.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked if the meeting would consider how the "Red Box Project" could be rolled out in Rotherham with local businesses and local charities helping out.

Councillor Watson confirmed he would be approaching local business or local charities to see how they could help with funds to roll out this programme.

**(14) Councillor Carter** asked what were the results of the recent homelessness audit carried out in Rotherham?

Councillor Beck confirmed the Council did not do a homelessness audit, but did monitor the number of homelessness cases and the number of rough sleepers through an annual count. This information was returned to Government as part of a national count return.

The service was currently working with eighteen known rough sleepers and was writing a new Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy that would be published in the spring.

The Council had also seen an increasing demand around homelessness. It was important to make a distinction of those vulnerable at the point of being homeless and having no home. This was an increasing issue for services and the Council took its duties seriously to work with those people to find a home as soon as possible through Council housing stock or out in the private/voluntary sector.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter firstly asked about the annual canvas, what form this took in the borough and how it happened and secondly, what statutory provision and obligation did the Council provide to homeless people in finding accommodation.

Councillor Beck confirmed the Council did signpost. Rotherham was fortunate to have Shiloh, the homelessness charity in Masbrough, who were there to support people who found themselves homeless. With them the Council were working hard to help people in those situations. The Help for Homeless People Card had also been issued and circulated.

In terms of the national audit a day was selected during the year for Council officers to count the number of rough sleepers found throughout the borough during the day. This was a growing issue nationally and it was very important the Council continued do all that it could.

**(15) Councillor Jepson** withdrew this question and asked that it be deferred to the Council Meeting in January, 2019.

**(16) Councillor Carter** asked how many retail units were now vacant that were occupied in April, 2017 in Rotherham town centre?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed the town centre had eleven more vacant properties in April, 2018 than it did in April, 2017. Sixteen of the properties which were recorded as vacant in April, 2017 had been re-occupied by April, 2018.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked was the net change seven fewer retail units or eleven more.

Councillor Lelliott confirmed that in April, 2017 of 378 town centre properties 94 (24.86%) were vacant.

In April 2018 of 376 town centre properties 105 properties were vacant (27.9%).

**(17) Councillor Jepson** referred to all Councillors recently being given the opportunity to object to the Government's proposals to allow shale gas exploration to be classed as permitted development which removed the decision making on these applications at a local level and asked did the Leader agree that it was disappointing that only nine chose to do so.

The Leader confirmed he was one of the nine who had signed this as Leader of the Council, but was aware that not all Members had received the email in the first place so was unable to comment on their behalf.

The Leader was also aware that the Planning Board had formally written to Government formally opposing those changes and Scrutiny had looked at this also so a number of Members had actively taken part in some discussions opposing those proposals.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jepson welcomed the answer from the Leader and wondered if not all Members had seen the email. Perhaps it would be helpful if this could be recirculated to all Members so that they were aware of changes.

The Leader confirmed this would be done.

**(18) Councillor Carter** asked did the Cabinet Member not think the previously mentioned changes to burial times in Rotherham went far enough in addressing the needs of Rotherham's communities?

Councillor Hoddinott explained the proposed changes introduced an additional 3.5 hours of available burial capacity each day which was a significant increase in overall capacity from the current arrangements.

This was a change that had been long campaigned for and the Cabinet Member took the opportunity to thank the faith and community groups, scrutiny, officers and Councillor Alam for their support in getting the change and making it happen.

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In a supplementary question Councillor Carter again asked if this change went far enough for dusk and daytime hours when compared to neighbours in terms of this being a first class service that Rotherham deserved.

Councillor Hoddinott noted Councillor Carter referring to dusk and daytime hours and pointed out that some of the comparators were larger cities when Rotherham needed to be compared with towns. The position would now be monitored as this was a pilot from 1st April, 2019. The three and a half hours a day extra was a significant increase in the service and she was pleased that this change had been achieved.

**(19) Councillor Carter** asked when did the Cabinet Member intend to make a formal announcement on the proposed changes to burial times?

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed the formal announcement date was yet to be agreed, but this would be well in advance of the trial which was planned for April, 2019.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked how did the Cabinet Member propose this announcement would take place.

Councillor Hoddinott explained there would be a series of briefings and public announcements along with discussions with community and faith groups. In getting this change there would also need to be a sequence of events that would require discussions with Registrars, the Coroner and Funeral Directors about how the opening hours would affect their business and services.

**(20) Councillor Jepson** asked when would the results of the 'Waste Bin Review' of 2017 be implemented and the promised new bins installed borough wide. He had contacted Streetpride on 20th March this year to report a badly damaged bin at North Anston, this had still not been replaced and asked if there was a reason why.

Councillor Allen confirmed that there was a backlog of litter bin requests. The Council had undertaken a procurement exercise to implement the replacement programme. The programme had now begun, but a decision was made to replace the old open-topped concrete bins as a priority, given the impact of these on the local environment, especially during windy weather. The service was now starting to work through the programme, and it was expected the damaged litter bin at North Anston would be replaced early January.

As part of the capital budget this year, the Council were investing £56,000 in renewing and replacing litter bins.

An eight week trial was shortly to be embarked upon for solar powered compaction bins and on conclusion the results would be fed back into the Streetpride Working Group for a discussion.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jepson asked if he could have a copy of the programme of replacement bins for when these were likely to be rolled out around the borough on a ward by ward basis if possible.

Councillor Allen would discuss with officers if this was possible to supply.

**(21) Councillor Carter** asked could RMBC guarantee that current safeguarded land in the local plan would not be developed on during this plan period?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed it would be safeguarded.

**(22) Councillor Jepson** referred to the Council deciding to set a two year budget up to 2020/21 and asked did the Leader agree that this would place financial restrictions and influence any future decisions that needed to be made by the new administration that would take over following the next elections in May, 2020.

The Leader explained that by law, the Council had to determine its budget requirement by 11th March each year and set a balanced budget to apply for the following financial year 1st April to 31st March. The responsibility to do this fell to the Elected Members of Council in place at that time and provided some certainty in the plans moving forward.

**(23) Councillor Carter** asked how much Council owned land had RMBC sold to housing developers in the past five years?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed that 27.12 acres (10.97 hectares) of Council owned land had to been sold to Housing Developers since December, 2013.

**(24) Councillor Carter** asked did RMBC intend to take on some of its neighbouring local authorities' housebuilding requirements beyond its own requirement under the "duty to cooperate" in this local plan period?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed the Council did not.

**(25) Councillor Carter** asked what was the process and policy for contacting the Council and subsequent end of tenancy when a relative died who lived in a Council house?

Councillor Beck confirmed that when a Council tenant passed away, the Next of Kin would notify the Council. This could be done in person at one of the customer service centres, over the phone through our Corporate Contact Centre or in writing.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked what happened with that information, was it disseminated to other Council departments and how long were the family given to vacate the property.

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Councillor Beck confirmed the information was disseminated to other services and usually it was around two weeks that the family were given to vacate the property.

**(26) Councillor Carter** asked how did RMBC deal with meeting dietary requirements of school children with medically diagnosed intolerances or allergies at school?

Councillor Watson explained the school meals service had a rigid process for dietary requirements. A meal would be supplied to meet the needs of the pupil providing they had been diagnosed by a doctor/dietician. Written medical evidence was required prior to provision of any school meal. The service would be notified of any pupil dietary requirements by the school the pupil attended. The service did not have direct access to any pupil personal information.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked given that process what procurement took place to ensure that school children, in terms of free school lunches, were given a suitable equivalent meal and what was the process when something went wrong or a mistake was made with food given to a child that was not appropriate to their allergy or intolerance.

Councillor Watson explained that one of the problems was if a child was not at a larger school where there were choices each day. However, if you were that one child that had a specific dietary requirement it would be unreasonable to cook different choices each day. It did limit the element of choice and Councillor Watson could not see a cost effective way around this.

In terms of mistakes with diets Councillor Watson had no knowledge of any such situation, but if Councillor Carter was aware of any specific case then he asked if he could share the information with him after the meeting.

**(27) Councillor Carter** asked how would the long overdue introduction of kerbside plastic recycling be communicated to residents?

Councillor Hoddinott explained a seminar was held to inform Elected Members of the process by which the changes to recycling would be implemented and communicated to residents and this took place on the 2nd October, 2018. This was well attended.

The Communications Plan was also discussed by the Improving Places Select Commission and how the detail would be communicated to residents

Changes to collections would be communicated in writing to all households, supplemented by bin tags and stickers at the appropriate time. Information would also be made available online, including a video.

Another seminar was taking place on 8th January, 2019, to further inform Elected Members about how the services would be introduced and communicated to residents. Councillor Carter had been invited to attend.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked for the date when the changes would be communicated and when would the recycling take place.

Councillor Hoddinott confirmed all this detail would be reported at the seminar. The recycling changes would be rolled out in four phases across the borough in stages so people would get to know at the relevant time. This would take around three months weather permitting.

**(28) Councillor Carter** referred to the Government announcing last month a top up of the Transforming Cities Fund to £2.4 billion and asked how much have each of the six Combined Mayoral Authorities been guaranteed in funding from this?

The Leader confirmed the 2018 Budget said that the Government was extending the Transforming Cities Fund by a year to 2022/23 and that this would provide an extra £240 million to the six (sic) metro mayors for significant transport investment in their areas: £21 million for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, £69.5 million for Greater Manchester, £38.5 million for Liverpool City Region, £23 million for West of England, £71.5 million for the West Midlands, and £16.5 million for Tees Valley.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked would the Leader agree that not getting the devolution deal for South Yorkshire means that it was now missing out on a significant amount of money.

The Leader confirmed he did agree South Yorkshire was missing out.

**(29) Councillor Carter** asked since the last Council meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> October, what contact had the Leader had with the other three South Yorkshire Council Leaders in securing their agreement to progress the Sheffield City Region devolution deal?

The Leader confirmed he was in contact with the other three South Yorkshire Council Leaders and Dan Jarvis, the Elected Mayor, and would continue to drive this issue.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked if the Council was any nearer in reaching agreement on this as it would seem to him that the Sheffield City Region Mayor had been in post more than six months and no progress had been made.

The Leader confirmed the Sheffield City Region Mayor had been in post for six months, but prior to that the Leader himself had been the chair so perhaps more than anyone the Leader felt the pain on this issue.

The Mayor had said publically that he had met with the Secretary of State in the last few days and he would continue to push with the Government to deliver on a manifesto commitment that we should sign up on the 2015 deal first and then try to use this for the authorities that wished to move to a one Yorkshire proposal. It would be premature for the Leader to speculate on any discussions, but the Mayor had the Leader's full support on taking this forward.

**(30) Councillor Carter** asked when would the proposed new pedestrian crossing in Anston by the A57 crossroads be built?

Councillor Hoddinott explained there was no confirmed start date for the works. There had been objections to the Traffic Regulation Order required to enable the scheme to progress. The Cabinet Member along with Ward Councillors were keen to progress this crossing in this area and she looked forward to supporting them in this.

In a supplementary question Councillor Carter asked if this crossing was now at risk of not going ahead, where would the money from the Sheffield City Region be spent instead.

Councillor Hoddinott explained every effort would be made to resolve this. The Traffic Regulation Order was being processed and officers were looking to get a resolution to this by the end of January, 2019.

**121. URGENT ITEMS**

There were none.

The Mayor, however, drew attention to the Memory Tree in the Town Hall reception and invited Members of the Council to leave a message and make a donation to the Mayor's Charity.

He formally closed the meeting by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.