

**COUNCIL MEETING
5th October, 2022**

Present:- Councillor Khan (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, Atkin, Aveyard, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Barker, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, Brookes, Browne, Burnett, A Carter, C Carter, Clark, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, Elliott, Fisher, Griffin, Hague, Haleem, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Keenan, Lelliott, McNeely, Mills, Miro, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Roche, Sansome, Sheppard, Tarmey, Taylor, Thompson, Tinsley, Whomersley, Wilson, Wooding, Wyatt and Yasseen.

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

Prior to the start of the agenda, all those present joined the Mayor in a Minute's Silence due to this being the first meeting since the death of her late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. The Mayor noted how the early months of his time in office were shaped greatly by Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. It was with great sadness that he reflected on how his last month as Mayor had been shaped by her death.

58. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. He passed on his thanks and congratulation to all those involved in helping the Council win the LGC award for Most Improved Council at the ceremony in July 2022. The awards celebrated the achievements of officers and politicians in local government and the judges had unanimously agreed "that, from a rock bottom position it is possible to rebuild the trust of the community through understanding, courage and openness" and as such, recognised Rotherham as the Most Improved Council. The judges also recognised the humility shown in ensuring the journey was not yet complete.

The Mayor asked Members to join him in congratulating both the Military Community Veterans Centre and Rotherham Friends Indeed on being awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service. Vicky Hartley, Member and Civic Support Manager, had also received a High Sheriffs Award for service to Veterans. The Mayor offered his congratulations.

Full activity details from the Mayoral diary were contained in Appendix A of the Mayor's Letter and included:

- A 100th birthday celebration
- Attendance at the quarter finals of the Women's Euros
- A visit to the Lighthouse Homes Homeless Hostel
- Attendance at the Cutler's Feast in Sheffield
- Yorkshire Day celebrations in Keighley
- Attendance at the Rotherham Show
- A radio interview on the Pakistan Floods
- Attendance at the Apprentice of the Year Awards

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- Attendance at the installation of the New Curate at Thrybergh
- Attendance at Aston Local History Fair
- Attendance at Crossroads Care Masquerade Ball
- Magna Summer Reading Challenge
- Charity Badminton at Rotherham Leisure Complex.

Following the death of Her Majesty the Queen, the Mayor was proud to deliver the proclamation of His Majesty, King Charles III outside of Rotherham Town Hall. The Deputy Mayor represented the Borough at the County-wide proclamation in Sheffield. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor also attended memorial services for her late Majesty.

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barley, Castledine-Dack and Ellis.

60. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications received.

61. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

At the meeting a correction to the Minutes was requested. Minute 56, Question 24 should read, "*As Councillor Alam was not present at the meeting, a written response would be provided to Councillor Tarmey*".

Resolved:- That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 20th July, 2022, as corrected, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

62. PETITIONS

The Mayor introduced the report and confirmed the receipt of 2 petitions received since the last Council meeting:

- Containing 27 signatures calling on the Council to revise the conditions for asking questions at public meetings.
- Containing 349 signatures calling on the Council to address the traffic congestion at Hellaby and Bramley on Bawtry Road approaching J1 of the M18.

The lead petitioner for the 'questions at public meetings' petition was not in attendance at the meeting.

The lead petitioner for the 'traffic congestions on Bawtry Road' petition, Mrs Ann Rowley, attending the meeting and presented her petition to Council and read out a statement.

Resolved:-

- 1) That the report be received.
- 2) That the relevant Strategic Director be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday, 19th October, 2022.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

64. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

65. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public.

66. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader provided an update on a number of subjects. Since the last meeting the Council had received a "Good" Ofsted rating across the board. Inspectors said that "Children's Services are a clear priority for the Council" and there was a "whole Council commitment to children and families in Rotherham, and a learning culture is set from the top". The Ofsted report praised the way that social workers supported vulnerable children and kept them safe. Keeping vulnerable children and families safe was the Council's top priority. The Leader recorded his personal thanks to Councillor Cusworth, Suzy Joyner and the whole team for their continuous great work.

The first scheme in the Council's £4m Towns and Villages Fund programme had been completed in Greasbrough, linking Greasbrough Park and the nearby Recreation Ground through the creation of a new green corridor. 23 separate schemes will be implemented over the next 2 years and 2 schemes were underway.

Work had also been completed at Keppel's Column and Herringthorpe Athletics track whilst the new SEMH School at Dinnington had taken its first pupils.

The Leader provided a Covid-19 update as cases were rising nationally. 35 people were in hospital in Rotherham with infections in the week prior to the Council meeting. The Leader urged everyone who was contacted by the NHS with regards to their booster jabs to get theirs as soon as possible. Whilst it was hoped that the darkest days of the pandemic were past, everyone still had a role to play to keep themselves and their families and friends safe.

67. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETINGS

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester referenced Minute No. 19 on Page 87, Minute No. 26 on Page 96 and Minute No. 27 on Page 95 and asked the following questions:

1. As a Ward Councillor it was difficult to engage with developers, particularly in relation to Social Value, regarding the Chesterhill project. One scheme had been suggested for Rawmarsh which was not helpful to the residents of Thrybergh. What more could be done to increase member involvement and oversight on that?
2. There were plenty of neighbourhoods that were receiving hard cash in terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy which was not the same in deprived areas. Could such Social Value contributions be transferred to more deprived neighbourhoods to help them develop?
3. In terms of the Housing Development Strategy, the Chesterhill development should be 80% full according to the original development plan. However, no one was yet to move in. Other residents have been told that they would be moving to the Wise Living development in November, but this had been delayed to March. What more could be done to co-ordinate with Members so that they could advise communities accordingly, especially since this related to social housing?

Councillor Brookes confirmed she would provide a written response in relation to the delay with the Chesterhill development.

In relation to the first 2 questions and Social Value, Councillor Brookes confirmed that a recent housing workshop had focussed on this matter. However, Councillor Brookes would pick the matter up with officers as this particular issue had been identified, particularly around how local expertise from Ward Members should be used.

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 16th May and 20th June be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

68. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

Consideration was given to a report that sought approval for the Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22 that had been endorsed by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 28th June, 2022.

It was noted that the purpose of the Audit Annual Report 2021/22 was to bring together in one document a summary of the work that had been undertaken by the Council's Audit Committee. The production of the report complied with current best practice for audit committees and allowed the Audit Committee to demonstrate that it had fulfilled its terms

of reference and to share its achievements with the Council in providing assurance about its governance, risk management and financial and business controls.

Resolved:- That the Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22 be approved.

Mover:- Councillor Baker-Rogers

Seconder:- Councillor Cowen

69. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - SAFER ROTHERHAM PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2022-2025

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval of the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) Plan 2022-25. The Plan had been endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting on 20th September, 2022 after it had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 14th September, 2022. OSMB had requested that officers ensure wider engagement takes place to inform future and refreshed plans, including rural communities, disabled people, minority ethnics communities and those with other protected characteristics.

Community Safety Partnerships have a statutory responsibility to prepare an annual strategic assessment to identify community safety priorities across the local area, develop a partnership plan and co-ordinate activities to address the priorities. There is also a requirement to consult and engage with communities, ensuring their views are taken into account when identifying local priorities.

A comprehensive and enhanced review process commenced from May 2021 to inform new priorities and a new SRP Plan from 2022 to 2025. The enhanced review process included the use of the Management of Risk in Law Enforcement (MoRiLE) thematic tool, which was used widely by Police and community safety partnerships. It enabled a range of strategic issues to be assessed in a structured and consistent way, using a quantitative evidence base and detailed information about current and emerging trends of crime and disorder affecting communities within the Borough. The information was derived from a range of sources including South Yorkshire Police data, data provided by Partners, open-source research, national publications and information from key stakeholders. There were 4 component parts of the MoRiLE assessment – Impact and Harm (physical/psychological/financial); Likelihood (scale/tends); Confidence (data reliability); and Organisational Position (resources and external factors such as public expectations).

The Safer Rotherham Partnership Plan and priorities for 2022-2025 were agreed by the SRP Board on 7th April, 2022, in accordance with the outcomes of the MoRiLE assessments described above and taking into account the outcomes of consultation.

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Councillor Hoddinott offered her support for the Plan having been a former Chair of the Partnership. She noted the need to continually update the Plan, specifically in relation to Domestic Abuse and protecting women and young girls.

Resolved:-

1. That the Safer Rotherham Partnership Plan 2022-25 be approved.
2. That the requirement for scrutiny of the Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report, which is discharged by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be noted.

Mover:- Councillor Alam

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

70. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - JULY FINANCIAL MONITORING 2022/23

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the Council's financial monitoring position for 2022/23, based on July Financial Monitoring. The report was presented to Cabinet in September 2022 where it was agreed that, in order to give effect to the recommendations from Cabinet, consideration and approval by Council was required in relation to the recommendation relating to the Forge Island Development. This was set out in Appendix 2 to the report. Appendix 1 set out the July Financial Monitoring position to provide Members with sufficient knowledge to agree the proposals.

Council was asked to give Cabinet authority to approve amendments to the Council's Capital Programme in relation to the Forge Island leisure development, should it be necessary in order to secure best value for the taxpayer. The Council was progressing to deliver the redevelopment of Forge Island in line with the Town Centre Masterplan, with negotiations with private sector partners now reaching the final stages ahead of construction.

Development partners had been made aware, however, of issues relating to the funding of the Scheme due to the very recent volatility of the financial markets. This could pose challenges to private funders providing up-front capital within the requirements previously agreed by the Council. As such, the Council was in conversation with the Developer and the Council's Finance Team and Legal Team to ensure that the changes to the financial market did not negatively impact the delivery of the Project or unnecessarily increase the Council's liabilities.

A report was due to be presented to Cabinet on 17th October that would set out the options available to facilitate delivery. If Council approved the above-mentioned recommendation, it would allow Cabinet to choose from the full range of options for delivery, including further supplementing or

replacing what was expected to be privately raised capitals with the Council's own borrowing and capital resources. Such an option could only be agreed by Cabinet if doing so would ensure that the Council could fulfil its best value duty by financing the scheme through the most cost-effective mechanism. This was a highly time sensitive decision and there were likely to be significant additional cost pressures should Cabinet not be in a position to decide on 17th October 2022. The time pressures were due to external factors not within the control of the Council.

Members raised a number of questions on the report. These included questions on whether reassurance could be provided that the Council would get value for money; why there had been a 60 year delay; whether a cinema was still the right option; whether the decision could be delayed to allow for further scrutiny; the impact of the current financial market on the viability and future of the Scheme; how the Council could improve public confidence in the Scheme; the need for proper scrutiny; the £11.4m overspend currently forecast by the Council; the flexibility of the Scheme; the personal responsibility of the Leader for the delivery of the Scheme; the sharing of the financial information prior to the meeting.

Some Members also offered their support for the Scheme, stating that it was vital to the Town Centre for it to go ahead.

In response to the questions, the Leader confirmed that this Scheme saved money; the Council would continue assessing the value for money situation; there could not be a delay as that would cost money; there had been wide consultation on the Scheme before the last election; it was important to act now; the Council would work on building confidence; the fine detail was absent as this was an ever developing situation; the financial information is available to all Members; the budget had always been balanced under Councillor Read's leadership; the cinema would be one part of a huge leisure offer; the Scheme would be cost effective and would be going forward for scrutiny and the money could not be spent elsewhere. The Leader also stated that he would take personal responsibility for the delivery of the Scheme.

Resolved:- That the Cabinet have authority to approve amendments to the Council's Capital Programme in relation to the Forge Island leisure development, should this be necessary in order to secure best value for the taxpayer.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Lelliott

71. MEMBER LEAVE OF ABSENCE APPROVAL

This report had been withdrawn prior to the meeting.

72. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - ROTHERHAM WEST - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward updates for Rotherham West as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood 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 delivered through Ward Plans developed with residents to address local issues and opportunities. Ward Members were supported by the Neighbourhood Team and worked with officers and residents from a range of organisations to respond to residents.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillors Aveyard, Jones and Keenan provided an update on activities in Rotherham West ward:-

- There were 4 Ward Priorities:
 - Protect the local environment.
 - Improve the local environment (tree planting and the development of “friends of” groups to look after parks and green spaces.)
 - Support the development of projects and initiatives focussed on arts and culture.
 - Continue to support the community following COVID-19 with a particular focus on mental health and wellbeing.

- There had been a bin amnesty with the aim of educating residents around recycling and how to use their bins correctly.
- There had been a community skip day which was very well received.
- Improvements had been made to the Winterhill site such as clearance of the Engine Ponds.
- A memorial bench had been installed to celebrate the sacrifice of Ian McKay who was killed during the Falklands War.
- Jubilee Mugs were handed out to every primary school pupil in the Rotherham West area.
- A new football club had been established.
- A friends of Masbrough Cemetery group had also been set up.
- The Light Up the Night event on Ferham Park had been a major success for the community, celebrating the many artistic talents of residents.
- A further event named Spring Forward had also been successful.
- Other projects included the refurbishment of the BMX track; banner making and tree planting.
- Members placed on record their thanks to their neighbourhood officers.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.

Mover: Councillor Aveyard

Seconder: Councillor Jones

73. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - ROTHERHAM EAST - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward updates for Rotherham East as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood 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 delivered through Ward Plans developed with residents to address local issues and opportunities. Ward Members were supported by the Neighbourhood Team and worked with officers and residents from a range of organisations to respond to residents.

Update reports had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillors Cooksey, Haleem and Khan provided an update on activities in Rotherham East ward:-

- There were 5 Ward Priorities:
 - Support initiatives to help Rotherham East recover from the impacts of COVID-19.
 - Support and deliver initiatives involving local people.
 - Respond to crime and anti-social behaviour.
 - Work with local schools to support their aims and aspirations for their pupils.
 - Support initiatives which bring communities together and celebrate the diversity of Rotherham East.
- CLP's Social Supermarket had opened in March 2022 and was a valuable resource for local families.
- Badsley Moor Primary School Hub aimed to work with pupils and parents, helping them to be more involved in their children's learning.
- There had been a request for more street lighting repairs and the redeployment of CCTV to help with crime and anti-social behaviour across the Ward.
- The Park Road Cholera Burial Ground had been restored and was now a respectful and peaceful place to walk by.
- An Eastwood Village Action Plan had been established.
- An alleyway had been gated over concerns of fly-tipping, crime and anti-social behaviour.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.

Mover: Councillor Cooksey

Seconder: Councillor Haleem

74. NOTICE OF MOTION - GRANGE LANDFILL SITE

It was moved by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Elliot:

That this Council notes:-

Since 2016 there have been many complaints to the Environment Agency around the re-permitting of the Grange landfill site at Droppingwell. Despite the valiant efforts of the Droppingwell Action Group and numerous members of the public, the works carry on, without the proper level of scrutiny and regulation of the Environment agency. This has led to dozens of complaints that have been escalated to Stage 2 and several are now sitting with the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen.

The Council believes that:-

Due to the ineffective nature of the Environment Agency's regulation, its inability to take any kind of enforcement action, the members of the public in Rotherham West and this Council no longer have any confidence in the Environment Agency.

This Council resolves that:-

- Mirroring the thoughts and wishes of the residents of Droppingwell, Blackburn and Kimberworth, this Council should pass a motion of No Confidence in the Environment Agency's handling of the site.
- That the Chief Executive be required to write to the head of the Environment Agency and the Government minister impressing on them the need for a full, open and transparent public enquiry into the re-permitting and ongoing lack of regulation of the site.

It was moved by Councillor Z. Collingham and seconded by Councillor T. Collingham that the motion be amended as follows:

That this Council notes:-

Since 2016 there have been many complaints to the Environment Agency around the re-permitting of the Grange landfill site at Droppingwell. Despite the valiant efforts of the Droppingwell Action Group and numerous members of the public, the works carry on, without the proper level of scrutiny and regulation of the Environment agency. This has led to dozens of complaints that have been escalated to Stage 2 and several are now sitting with the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsmen.

The Council believes that:-

Due to the ineffective nature of the Environment Agency's regulation, its inability to take any kind of enforcement action, the members of the public in Rotherham West and this Council no longer have any confidence in the Environment Agency.

DELETE:-

This Council resolves that:-

- ***Mirroring the thoughts and wishes of the residents of Droppingwell, Blackburn and Kimberworth, this Council should pass a motion of No Confidence in the Environment Agency's handling of the site.***
- ***That the Chief Executive be required to write to the head of the Environment Agency and the Government minister impressing on them the need for a full, open and transparent public enquiry into the re-permitting and ongoing lack of regulation of the site.***

INSERT

This Council resolves to:-

- ***Ask the Group Leaders to jointly write to the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency (EA) to request an urgent review of all complaints made to the EA in relation to the permitting and regulation of Grange Landfill and convene a public meeting in the Borough to address these complaints and residents' ongoing concerns.***
- ***Ask the Group Leaders to jointly write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request that they urgently review the permitting and regulation of Grange Landfill by the EA, their handling of complaints and opportunities to intervene to discontinue landfill operations or improve the regulation of the same.***

On being put to the vote, the amendment to the motion was declared as lost.

The substantive motion (as moved by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Elliot) was now debated.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared as carried.

Mover: Councillor Jones

Seconder: Councillor Elliot

75. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers Seconder: Councillor Cowen

76. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Hughes Seconder: Councillor Wyatt

77. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Atkin Seconder: Councillor Bird

78. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Alam Seconder: Councillor Allen

79. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee be adopted.

Mover: Councillor McNeely Seconder: Councillor Griffin

80. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

Councillor A. Carter: Can the spokesperson confirm that the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority has divested all funds from Russian or Belarussian-affiliated organisations and industries?

Councillor Havard: Thank you for your question Councillor Carter. As the last time you asked, trading any such assets is prevented either by sanctions or by the fact that proceeds of sale cannot be taken out of Russia. So they cannot legally be divested. If anything changed, Councillor Carter would be informed.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter asked: Did the South Yorkshire Pensions Authority have assets prior to the sanctions that now cannot be divested because of the sanctions and was there a desire to divest once sanctions were lifted?

Councillor Havard explained that it was not for South Yorkshire Pensions Authority to make the decision to divest because they were part of a national pool and such decisions had to go through the Fund Manager. However the assets that South Yorkshire Pensions Authority did have were only a very small amount.

81. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

1. Councillor Jones: Can you please explain to me at what point does documentation held by RMBC become "legally privileged" when subject to an FOI request?

Councillor Alam: The rules about when a document is considered to be legally privileged are set out in Section 42 of the Freedom of Information Act.

When an FOI is requested, if the Information Governance Team believe it may be subject to Section 42, then a member of the Legal Team is always consulted to ensure the Act is applied correctly.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Jones stated that in January 2022, he had requested under on FOI for all documentation held by RMBC in relation to the access road to Grange Park. Councillor Jones was refused access to any documents after the year 2000 because they were now part of a legal bundle and, therefore, legally privileged. Councillor Jones asked for the decision to be reviewed by an independent officer. The officer stated in his reply that he had been told by Legal that the information was legally privileged. This was not an independent review as he never saw the information to make the judgement himself. Councillor Jones had since taken legal advice from a specialist solicitor who dealt with FOI's and had been told that he could not ask to see the bundle, instruction or advice, which he did not ask for in the first place; any information held by RMBC before the bundle was created cannot be classed as legally privileged and, therefore, should have been disclosed. The legal advice stated that either the solicitors at the Council were either inexperienced in dealing with FOI requests and had mistakenly applied the legal exemption or had deliberately tried to mislead a Member of the Council. Councillor Jones asked Councillor Alam which one it was?

Councillor Alam asked Councillor Jones to send through his requests for the documents and he would look into it for him and get a reply.

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2. Councillor Cooksey: Have the Council any plans to consider food waste recycling?

Councillor Beck: At the moment the Council have no plans to introduce kerbside collection of food waste, although national government may have to change what is required on that through legislation. That was being watched carefully. However, the Council did have processes in place for food waste currently. It went to the BDR plant which was an Anaerobic Digestion Plant whereby around 99% of waste was recycled, turned into compost or turned into energy pellets through onward movement into industry.

In her supplementary, Councillor Cooksey stated that it was her understanding the Government legislation could mean that kerbside food waste recycling could be required in the next few years. She asked that if that were to become a legal requirement, did the Council have any plans for a trial such as what was currently being done in Sheffield? This trial enabled the Council to look at how many people would recycle food and how much was likely to be collected over different areas to inform the service.

Councillor Beck explained that, if the Government did bring in the new legislation to introduce the recycling of food by Council's, Rotherham Council could, by virtue of already having the Anaerobic Digestion Plant, have an exemption. At the moment, the Council could not technically say that food waste was being recycled because of the strict rules around using the word "recycled" but they could say it was being reused. This did not stop the Council from potentially doing a trial but there was confidence already in the investment that had been made in the BDR plant and its operation.

3. Councillor Whomersley: A Resident told me that CRG Healthcare are constantly late and missing appointments. There should be 3 appointments a day, alarmingly CRG Healthcare say they are unable to commit to fixed appointments sometimes leaving people uncared for until the afternoon. What is being done to ensure this is not happening widely and often and what further steps can be taken?

Councillor Roche: Sorry to hear of the concerns raised by your constituent in relation to their package of care and support from CRG Healthcare. This is clearly of concern and officers will investigate the concerns you have raised and will be in touch for the details. Councillor Roche asked Councillor Whomersley to raise these issues directly with the Service or himself to ensure any issues are dealt with quickly. Councillor Roche provided reassurance that there were no other concerns of this nature being addressed with this provider.

All providers were registered with the Care Quality Commission and must meet regulatory requirements; the Council's Compliance Team undertook regular visits and quality assured the delivery of care; care

packages were also reviewed by the assessor with the individual to ensure needs were being met.

Concerns such as these remain rare amongst the 17,000 hours of care which are commissioned by the Council and delivered by providers each week in the person's home. However, the impact can be significant if the care plan is not delivered as commissioned. When services do not meet expected standards, the Council does act through compliance visits; imposing improvement plans; suspending the provider or in extreme situations terminating the contract.

4. Councillor Monk: What does the recent Ofsted judgement of Good mean for children and families of Rotherham?

Councillor Cusworth: The Leader mentioned earlier in the meeting about the Good Ofsted rating. There had been a very detailed inspection of all areas of the Children and Young People's Service within the Council. The Good Ofsted rating should give confidence that our children and families in Rotherham are receiving a consistent service from Children's Social Care and other key partners at all levels of the system. Where families need help or protection, this is provided by a range of experienced, permanent, and skilled practitioners across both Early Help and Children's Social Care. This meant that families were having to tell their stories fewer times which was a matter that was constantly fed back as the need to not have to repeat a family's story was very welcome. This helped keep children safe. The children's voice came through very clearly in the inspection.

The inspection confirmed that the Council engage with the wider family well, and children are supported to remain safely within their own families where this was appropriate. This was often what children wanted; to be able to remain with their families. Inspectors confirmed that where this is not achievable, the Council find good alternatives for our children and permanence is achieved quickly. This ensures that most children can grow up in their own local community and maintain their lifelong links and sense of identity. We support these arrangements with financial assistance and carers can access a range of other services such as therapy and parenting support to help children overcome any adverse childhood experiences. If adverse childhood experiences can be dealt with early enough and interventions put in place, it can prevent further trauma into adulthood.

The experience of our Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers has improved. The report evidences that the Council know their children and families well and that it listens, records and acts on the voice of the child consistently well. The work of the LAC Council has helped the Council to shape these services, and this was recognized in the report. The LAC Council was very pleased to have been mentioned in the report saying that it was a meaningful Corporate Parenting Panel that listened to what they wanted and worked with

them to achieve the best outcomes. The Care Leavers were supported to find a good standard of accommodation and achieve independence and were helped to find employment and training. The fact that this was being consistently done was reassuring.

The good judgement would help the Council to retain and attract a good workforce, consistency of social workers and which was what families wanted.

The journey from “Inadequate” to “Good” over the past several years had been remarkable but everyone was ambitious and wanted to achieve the next step of being rated “Outstanding.”

5. Councillor McNeely: Could the Cabinet Member kindly confirm to me that the proposed new central markets and library development in my Ward will indeed go ahead, despite speculation to the contrary, and that the Council is able to fund the scheme without imposing additional costs onto the taxpayer?

Councillor Lelliott: It was confirmed that the Council were moving ahead with the markets and library scheme. It was one of the flagship transformation projects in the Council’s adopted Town Centre Masterplan.

The planning application for the site had been prepared and submitted and was currently under consideration by the Council’s Planning Service. The appointment of a contractor to build the scheme was underway with an announcement expected in November. Construction on site was currently scheduled to commence next summer.

6. Councillor Baker-Rogers: In recent weeks, articulated lorries have frequently been parking, for up to 4 days, in laybys on Herringthorpe Valley Road. The lorries present a hazard to pedestrians and other road users, make bin collections difficult, and most importantly reduce access for emergency vehicles. What can the Council do to stop this?

Councillor Beck: The Council had received reports of a vehicle parking overnight in this area, however, at the moment enforcement action could not be taken as the parking was taking place in an unrestricted area. There were no powers to enforce where that was the case. Councillor Beck had asked officers to work with Councillor Baker-Rogers to find the best solution which may involve introducing restrictions in that location.

7. Councillor Baker-Rogers: How is the Council planning to utilise Warm Hubs to support residents during the cost of living crisis?

Councillor Sheppard: What a dreadful state it is that in 2022, in the sixth richest country in the world, Members were sat with the knowledge that residents would go hungry, cold or both this winter. What an absolute disgrace.

Plans were being made for residents led by the Public Health Team and the Council was currently working with Directorates and partners to establish a programme of Warm Welcome sites across the Borough to reflect and respond to the needs of residents when the cold weather hits this winter.

The underlying principles were that residents:

- Get a warm welcome at a range of RMBC and community venues and are able to use the facilities.
- There is no stigma attached to staying at the sites for any period of time.
- Advice/ signposting will be available to residents with respect to the support and benefits both nationally and locally available to them.

Where feasible, sites will be promoting a Warm Welcome alongside a range of activities, existing and new, to ensure a welcome to all Rotherham residents, with support, advice and signposting for residents available (if this is requested). This would help with residents' mental health as well.

Council sites included in this are our libraries, Clifton Park Museum, theatre and leisure centre sites, this provides Borough-wide coverage and a range of opening hours 7 days per week. Discussions have taken place with some voluntary sector partners and interest has been expressed by Parish Councils which was greatly appreciated.

The Warm Welcome approach would continue to be developed up to and throughout the winter as the Council understands the impacts of both the cost of living rises and the national and local mitigations that were in place and the needs of residents.

In her supplementary question, Councillor Baker-Rogers asked if there would be Hubs in every Ward?

Councillor Sheppard explained that it was the intention to have Hubs in every Ward. Work would be done across the range of publicly owned Council buildings. No community would be left behind.

8. Councillor Baker-Rogers: How are students and staff settling in at the new Social Emotional and Mental Health school in Dinnington?

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Councillor Cusworth: Was really pleased to say that feedback from colleagues at Elements Academy is that staff and students are settling in well. She had visited the site during the building phase and would be visiting the site again soon and she was looking forward to seeing it.

A significant amount of work to support transition into the Elements Academy has happened prior to the summer school break and once pupils returned in September; it was a phased transition. This included opportunities for parents, carers, and pupils to visit the school and home visits to support all pupils to develop strong transitional timetables to the new school. The school has also undertaken further recruitment to support additional staffing.

Where there has been any issues identified relating to attendance or a reluctance to attend the new school, staff have looked to offer alternative opportunities for pupils to attend or looked at outreach support to build up relationships between the school, parent, carers and pupil.

Due to the specific need of the cohort, pupils will have some adaption to provision over this first half-term to make sure that their needs are appropriately assessed, that the new building is fully owned by the school community, and for pupil groupings to be developed further to make sure that all pupils can access the core curriculum at the new school. But overall a pleasing start.

Councillor Cusworth was very pleased that there was a school in Rotherham that would meet the needs of children with SEMH needs. When speaking at the Westminster Education Forum, other authorities were very impressed with this specific provision which reaffirmed that, along with other areas within Children's Services, Rotherham was ahead of the curve.

9. Councillor Hoddinott: At the last meeting it was revealed that some Councillors had not undergone DBS checks. Have all Councillors now had these basic safeguarding checks?

Councillor Allen: Unfortunately, even with the earnest endeavours of the Democratic Services team, it had not been possible to complete this process for one Member.

In her supplementary, Councillor Hoddinott asked who that one Member was?

Councillor Allen confirmed that she had sought legal advice and there were no reasons as to why the Councillor could not be named in terms of data protection and the Councillor was Councillor Hague.

10. Councillor Hoddinott: In this year's budget the Labour group committed an extra £144,000 to support children and families potentially affected by child criminal exploitation. Can the Cabinet Member update Council on the use of that investment?

Councillor Cusworth: The additional investment has been used to increase the staffing in Evolve by one Advanced Practitioner, one Social Worker and 2 Family Support Workers.

Evolve currently work with on average 90 young people across all forms of Child Exploitation at any one time. The additional capacity has enabled EVOLVE to meet the demands to address Criminal Exploitation, ensuring there is one pathway for all children at risk of Exploitation, utilising the expertise developed for Sexual Exploitation and apply it to Criminal Exploitation. In so doing the Council cannot only help to protect more children from these terrible crimes but also ensure that the child themselves is less likely to be criminalised and in the Youth Offending Team pathway as this would not be the right thing to do. The additional resources can work in a more specific way to identify potential vulnerabilities to exploitation.

There had been a Member Seminar on the Monday prior to Council which demonstrated the close partnership working between the Council and external partners.

The additional staffing levels have also increased the capacity in the Evolve Service to provide additional consultation, awareness raising and delivery of training to the Council workforce, parents and carers and all key partners.

Following the inspection, Ofsted said that the co-location of partners within the Evolve Service enabled the effective sharing of information; that plans were comprehensive and child focussed; that relationship-based practice supported children to make progress in understanding exploitation; and that risks were subsequently reduced for children. This was all possible due to the additional investment.

In her supplementary, Councillor Hoddinott stated that it was very useful to know that it was embedded in the Evolve team. When looking at strategies, things tended to be put in boxes such as Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation but on the ground it was not that simple. There were not those lines and so the fact that it was embedded was very welcome.

Councillor Cusworth agreed that the matters did not exist in isolation and there was crossover. Recently, the PREVENT Champions Network, as well as looking at radicalisation and potential radicalisation, was also looking at Child Exploitation because they were all forms of grooming and safeguarding risks.

11. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Would you agree that should any licenses be applied for locally that the prevailing attitude locally is that Rotherham does not consent to fracking?

Councillor Read: The Leader certainly did agree with Councillor Bennett-Sylvester on that and stated that he could not believe the country was back at this situation again. Nor could he believe that the situation was again that the Government was using an energy crisis to make it more difficult to use certain forms of clean, renewable sources of energy but re-open the potential of fracking. The Leader thought that anywhere in the country there would be serious resistance to fracking, but he certainly did not believe that there was consensus in any of the places previously suggested in Rotherham.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked that, given it was a prominent part of Liz Truss MP's leadership campaign, would he also agree that anybody, whether they sit on Council benches or green benches or whatever their retail politics, if there was the dark day where fracking came to the Rotherham Borough, they would be a fracking enabler?

The Leader certainly agreed on the basis that it was quite clear what that change would mean and the implications for the communities. As such, individual people needed to take responsibilities for their actions.

12. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: To give it its full name, the former arts centre was the Brian O'Malley Library and Arts Centre. Are there any intentions to rename any other future venues after the Musicians' Union MP?

Councillor Sheppard: In thanking Councillor Bennett-Sylvester for the question, Councillor Sheppard confirmed that his interest had been spiked and he had indeed been googling Brian O'Malley and learning as much as he could. It was obvious that Mr. O'Malley contributed an awful lot to the local area and nationally before sadly passing away very young. Currently, there were no plans to name any current or future venues after the Musicians Union MP. However, there was a naming protocol that Councillor Sheppard could go in to.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained that this could be a name for the new library. He also raised the issue of working-class history and its stories and that often there was a sense of impermanence. This could be seen with the library going and the names not being passed on. Going forward, when it comes to local heritage projects, when a building is changed or lost, could there be a continuity of names so that those names can continue to be known by whatever means throughout the Borough?

Councillor Sheppard agreed that working class history needed to be celebrated as much as the rich and supposedly good of the country in past times. There was a lot to be celebrated and to be proud of that had been achieved by local people. There was a naming protocol that would be shared. It was acknowledged that when a building goes it is difficult to get that name attached to a subsequent building or site but it was something that could be looked at in the future.

13. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: When first briefed in June 2021 Ward Members were advised that the scheme to ease congestion on the Mushroom Roundabout by increasing the number of lanes on the A630 in Dalton should be completed by now. Can you please advise on what now is a reasonable eta for the scheme to progress?

Councillor Beck: The proposed scheme was in the process of being reviewed, particularly in light of significant additional costs that had been identified for the delivery of the scheme. This particularly related to required major utility diversions in the location. However, it was still a scheme that was being worked on with South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, who were the principal funders, to try and find a way forward. Officers had been asked to provide an update to both Councillor Bennett-Sylvester and Councillor Baker-Rogers on the scheme moving forward.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester thanked Councillor Beck for his comments at the last Transport Advisory Board where this matter, in relation to bus services, had been raised. It was reiterated that this scheme was not just about cars but the reliability and threat to bus services. It was essential to show the bus companies could make a profit on this route.

Councillor Beck agreed. It all made sense, but it just came down to the funding opportunities which Ward Members would be kept up-to-date on.

14. Councillor Tinsley: When a planning application dictates that S106 Money should be paid to schools because student numbers are already beyond capacity, what checks are undertaken to make sure that money is spent towards increasing student places?

Councillor Lelliott: There are a number of checks to ensure that S106 contributions to increase school places are spent on measures that actually deliver school places.

Firstly, S106 contributions are legal agreements and the rules governing Section 106 monies do not allow them to be spent on anything other than what they are collected for, so contributions for education are financially ringfenced to specific developments or Wards and must be linked to increasing capacity in schools.

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A record of all S106 agreements was kept on a specialist system which identifies all the S106 obligations and when they are due to be received. This system also provides the audit trail to ensure that money is collected and spent in accordance with these legal requirements

At the commencement of the planning process, the Education Service will identify the need for school places, and any contributions that are needed are included in the S106 agreement. When the Education Service bring forward a school expansion project and S106 is identified as a source of funding, a check is undertaken to ensure that any S106 to be used complies with the criteria in the S106 agreement. All Section 106 funding is monitored by the Local Planning Department and the Finance Department.

S106 funds are paid directly by the developer to the Council, as these relate to planning agreements. These can either be spent directly by the Council, in which case capital projects are managed and checked through the Council's capital governance procedures, or alternatively the funds can be provided to the school to spend on a scheme, in which case such projects are governed through a funding agreement.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley stated that there were many developments going on around Maltby including Grange Lane, potentially at Maltby Tip and one at Ravensfield which affects Maltby Academy. It would be interesting to see if that money had been spent and increased capacity?

Councillor Lelliott asked Councillor Tinsley to send her the details and she would look into it.

15. Councillor Tinsley: Is there currently staff shortages within Community Protection and Environmental Health (Enforcement Officers)?

Councillor Beck: No. In total there are 37 Enforcement Officers within the team and there are currently 4 vacancies included in that 37. This was in line with normal staff attrition/ staff turnover levels.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked if the workloads for Enforcement Officers were monitoring? He gave the example of them being snowed under in Maltby and asked that any reinforcements be sent to Maltby.

Councillor Beck explained that managers within the team managed the workloads. Councillor Beck saw the Enforcement Officers being busy as a good thing because it meant they were doing their job and responding to Members and members of the public on issues that were important to all of the people of Rotherham, and specifically Maltby in this case. Councillor Beck asked Councillor Tinsley to directly raise any issues about work not being done with him outside of

the meeting. It was good to know that the Council's Enforcement Officers were doing their job.

16. Councillor Tinsley: Why was there not any notification or consultation by RMBC over the surrendering of the lease for the public field to the rear of Highfield Park Maltby?

Councillor Sheppard: The Council did not surrender the lease. The Council entered into a 10 year lease in year 2000 and had been 'holding over' since the expiry of the term. The owners terminated this arrangement some 12 years after the time it might have been expected to come to an end.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley stated that he would have to check that as, following an FOI request, he had been told that the Council did surrender it. He also stated that a notification for Ward Members would have been good as it was also good to be kept informed.

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that as the lease had expired, there was not anything physical happening to notify Ward Members about.

17. Councillor Tinsley: Has any offer been previously made By DMBC to offer alternative building land as a substitute for building houses on the Green Space behind Highfield Park Maltby?

Councillor Lelliott: No, Doncaster Council have never offered to allocate land within their Borough for any housing need in Rotherham nor had it been sought.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked whether there had been any discussions over the housing and the impacts that the development on Grange Lane could make?

Councillor Lelliott would provide a written response.

18. Councillor Tinsley: Is it possible to devolve parking enforcement to Parish/Town Councils so that they can deal with parking if they wish to do so?

Councillor Lelliott: Unfortunately, it was not possible to devolve parking enforcement to third parties such as parish councils.

19. Councillor Clark: Would the Leader of the Council congratulate the Museums Art and Heritage Team on their incredible work, in drawing down funding to renovate and restore Keppel's column and opening it to the public for the first time in over [50] years, and in working with the local community in a positive way to enhance the whole experience?

Councillor Read: Acknowledged the good work of the Museums, Arts and Heritage Team and the support from officers in Strategic Asset Management, Finance and Legal. The officers have been instrumental in securing the future of Keppel's Column through the recent restoration project. It was noted that both Councillor Read and Councillor Clark had attended Keppel's Column a few weeks ago and had gone to the top of the tower for the first time. The engagement with the community was particularly welcomed as some were initially concerned about the project and the impact it may have to a place where residents were now much more positive about the project. That was testament to the great work that had been done.

20. Councillor Tarmey: Regional airport infrastructure is important to local economic development and business continuity at a time when there are significant delays at seaports. Neighbouring authorities have commissioned assessments of the impact of the announced closure of Doncaster-Sheffield airport. Has the administration commissioned work to evaluate the impact of reduced passenger and cargo volumes on transport infrastructure, businesses, and residents?

Councillor Lelliott: It was agreed that the airport was very important to the region's economy. However, Rotherham Council has not commissioned any work to evaluate the impact of the closure of Doncaster-Sheffield airport. This was due to the SYMCA having jointly commissioned an economic impact assessment alongside private sector partners (e.g. Doncaster Chamber of Commerce) and this work is due to be released soon. Councillor Lelliott confirmed that this would be shared when received.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tarmey asked if the Cabinet Member was aware that Peel Group had a track record of doing this elsewhere, in terms of deliberately making airports unprofitable at other sites in the UK, including Sheffield and the high-profile case at Teesside where the Conservative Mayor and the Local Authority (a Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition) actually managed to buy Peel out with the cash that they had available?

Councillor Lelliott explained that she did know this but noted that Peel had invested quite a lot of money and had managed to get Wizz Air to relocate to Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

21. Councillor Bacon: Concerns over the A57 were not new, and with recent data from a speed survey and anti-social behaviour becoming a regular occurrence, was it not time Rotherham Council back a speed camera on this road for 24/7 enforcement?

Councillor Beck: A speed survey was undertaken on the A57 in February 2022, midway between the M1 and Red Lion roundabout, and this indicated a good overall degree of compliance with the speed limit, coupled with a good safety record, so the site does not meet the criteria for permanent speed camera installation.

However, Councillor Beck had been working with Police to ensure that the A57 is on the list of sites for mobile enforcement, and an arrangement between the Council and South Yorkshire Safety Camera Partnership will see the site routinely enforced by the Safety Camera van. The maintenance layby at the end of Goosecarr Lane had been selected as the location for the van.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bacon stated that a 24/7 speed camera was needed as some vehicles had been reported as doing 100 miles per hour on that road.

Councillor Beck explained surveys and assessments were done for a reason and if the question did not give the desired answer, that sometimes had to be accepted. The survey did show that the road did not meet the criteria for a permanent speed camera. In fact, it was nowhere near meeting the criteria. However, action had been taken over the concerns with the Speed Camera Partnership. This was the Police and the Police monitored had agreed to make it a mobile enforcement site.

22. Councillor A. Carter: Would Councillor Read agree that the recently announced closure of Doncaster Sheffield Airport is a travesty and that both the Government and the South Yorkshire Mayor have failed our residents in not stopping this from happening?

Councillor Read: It was agreed that the closure would have a huge impact on the local economy and it was certainly bad news for the long term future of South Yorkshire's economy to lose a major strategic asset. It was also a tragedy for the 180 people who were employed there directly and more in the wider supply chain.

In relation to the South Yorkshire Mayor, Councillor Read was of the understanding that the Mayor had put together a package worth millions of pounds on the table to effectively underwrite Peel's expected losses on the site for the coming year which would have put them in a position where they could operate without risk to their operation. Peel turned this down.

In relation to Peel's operation elsewhere, Councillor Read understood that the purchase price of Teesside Airport was around £30/£40 million to buy out the whole thing. However, this relied on having a seller who was willing to sell. The fact that they had said no to the Mayor's offer showed how they had approached the negotiations.

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What the Government had done was an altogether different matter. The new Prime Minister had made a commitment to do everything she could to keep the airport open. Councillor Read was still waiting to see what that amounted to.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter shared Councillor Read's concerns that they needed to see more Government action on this. He asked whether there was any feasibility work being done by Rotherham Council on a Combined Authority level to see whether the Combined Authority and Local Councils could buy Peel out in a similar way to Teesside Airport?

Councillor Read explained that Rotherham Council was not in the position to be able to do that. However, there was work going on between the Mayoral Combined Authority and Doncaster Council which would examine all options including compulsory purchase. If that was an option and a proposal was brought forward, Rotherham Council would consider that proposal as a member of the Combined Authority.

23. Councillor Bacon: After much campaigning, Councillor Bacon was happy pavements and roads are finally being repaired in Aston and Todwick. Residents in Todwick have repeatedly raised concerns with him over the quality of works carried out on their pavements. What assurances could the Cabinet Member give the residents of Todwick that works carried out on their pavements and roads will be of the highest standard?

Councillor Beck: It was pleasing to see Councillor Bacon acknowledge that Aston and Todwick had been served well by the Labour groups budget for 2022/23. Todwick in particular had fared really well when it came to resurfacing pavements.

The recent footway repairs in Todwick Village were delivered through the Council's Footway Micro Asphalt repair programme which was recognised across the industry as a safe and good way of resurfacing pavements. The methods used were effective in doing that. If there were any specific issues that needed to be dealt with, officers would of course deal with those.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bacon asked why it took so long in the first place to get the pavements resurfaced?

Councillor Beck explained that the residents he had spoken to in Todwick were very happy with the quality of the pavements. There was some short-term disruption that residents had had to deal with but the pavements on the Meadows Estate in Todwick were much improved. The works would be expanded to other areas in the Borough.

In direct response to the question, Councillor Beck explained that there had been challenges in investing in pavement resurfacing over the recent years due to the sizeable cuts that the Council had felt. It was expected that this was over, but Austerity looked set to continue following a recent announcement over the past couple of weeks. Councillor Beck stated that it was okay for Members of the Opposition to be smiling and laughing now but they would have to be part of the decision that the Council would have to make on this and it was about time they realised the impact of the decisions made nationally by their Conservative Government on the people of Rotherham and the Rotherham Council budget.

24. Councillor A. Carter: With regards to enforcement of fly-tipping and ensuring that council-owned alley gates (such as those in Duncan and Ellis Street in Brinsworth) are kept accessible to residents, does the Cabinet Member agree with residents that the Council's performance in tackling this has worsened recently?

Councillor Beck: Councillor Beck did not agree. The Council had been investing in Cleaner, Greener activities across the Borough. It was a Council ambition, and they were doing well on delivering on that to increase enforcement activity. Enforcement activity was up significantly on last year and it was part of the Council plan that this was done.

The Council had received reports of fly tipping relating to the area mentioned and officers had investigated each incident but had not been able to identify any evidence to support further action. If evidence was found, officers would take appropriate action and so Councillor Beck would encourage reports to be made. In relation to any specific issues around access to alley gates, officers would be keen to support resolving these issues if the Member can provide me with specific details.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter stated that any information from Ward Members was passed on to the relevant team. It had been agreed a number of years ago that there would be some dedicated time to clear up alleyways but Covid-19 interfered with this and had not been rescheduled. Councillor A. Carter asked if this dedicated time could again be established to help areas such as Duncan and Ellis Street in Brinsworth? He also asked what the Cabinet Member's opinion was of moving the Service to longer hours and the impact this had had on staff, particularly in relation to more evening and weekend working?

Councillor Beck explained that issues around alleyways were dealt with by the Streets and Ground Maintenance Teams who had received investments of £500,000 this year to ensure the permanence of the workforce all year round. As the colder winter months approached, the Council would no longer be cutting the grass which would free up

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some capacity. A seminar had been held to discuss this and all Members were encouraged to get in touch to propose areas for targeted activity through the winter period. The additional resource would hopefully lead to further improvements across the Borough.

In relation to the changes in operating hours, Councillor Beck was of the belief that this had been a positive change. It had led to the creation of a more flexible and agile service when it came enforcement. However, the officers were only as good as the information they received from Ward Members and members of the public. Councillor Beck therefore encouraged Members to work as effectively as they could with officers and if there were any issues to let him know.

25. Councillor C. Carter: Given the Council has rightly declared a climate emergency and nature crisis, does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the Council needs to expand the Trees and Woodland Team to meet our obligations, and give residents the comprehensive Tree Service that they deserve?

Councillor Sheppard: The Council's Tree Service and the service it provides has already benefitted from £350,000 of capital investment for tree planting to cover 2021/22 and 2022/23. In addition the Council provided an extra £50,000 in the budget for the provision of an additional Tree Engagement Officer. A third investment of £100,000 per year for 2022/23 and 23/24 was made to allow the Service to respond more positively to Member's casework for trees. This was already being effective. Those investments did not just happen by themselves. They happened by careful programming and discussions and also by the voting on the budget which Labour Members voted for which provided that additional investment.

In her supplementary, Councillor C. Carter stated that Members in Brinsworth had enjoyed working with the Trees and Woodlands team over the past months, but it was quite clear that the team seemed very stretched and struggled to meet demand. It was asked whether the additional officer was already in post?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that the officer was in post and working with Members already. There had been some gaps through retirement and ill health but these had now been filled.

26. Councillor A. Carter: Residents in Brinsworth are rightly frustrated by the bus service changes that mean many people feel cut off by the withdrawal of early morning and evening buses, as well as the total withdrawal of Sunday services. What progress has happened since July in reinstating these vital bus services?

Councillor Beck: At the last meeting, the Leader suggested Councillor A. Carter support Labour's bus campaign – and it was stated that if he had done, Councillor A. Carter would have known by now about the extra investment the Council and the SYMCA made in keeping buses on streets across the whole of Rotherham.

Following the campaign, SYMCA received confirmation from Government of an extension to the Bus Recovery Grant until March 2023, and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has committed an additional £7m of reserves to keep buses going. In effect, the SYMCA were now subsidizing as many bus services as the operators are prepared to run.

This did not stretch to the services referred to, and SYMCA are currently seeking to identify arrangements to mitigate for changes in the Brinsworth area. Councillor Beck did state that the Government were withdrawing from the commitment they had made on public transport. However Leaders across South Yorkshire and Rotherham were working hard to lobby Government and do everything they could to keep those buses running.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter asked whether the Cabinet Member agreed that it was wrong to expect buses to run purely for profit when this was not expected of the road network? He also stated that it was all well and good some bus services being retained throughout the Borough, but it did not go far enough. Some residents in Brinsworth could not get to work before 9.00 a.m., they could not get out anywhere on a Sunday. It was, therefore, asked whether the Cabinet Member thought more money should be invested and specifically whether more bus services could be brought back to Brinsworth to make sure residents could get to work and use services elsewhere in the Borough?

Councillor Beck agreed that a publicly funded bus service was needed across South Yorkshire. Privatisation of bus services had not worked, and it probably had not worked for over a decade. This put pressure on those locally to try and keep buses going for as long as possible, to ensure they are viable and to make sure as many parts of Rotherham are served as best as possible.

Councillor Beck could not promise Councillor Carter any form of commitments specifically on Brinsworth, nor could he make commitments on any other area of the Borough. However, all parties continued to do their best.

27. Councillor C. Carter: With the cost-of-living crisis affecting families throughout the Borough (and indeed the country), will the Council commit to extending the Rothercard scheme to more services and increasing the discounts for those who currently qualify?

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Councillor Sheppard: A review of the Rothercard scheme is currently underway as set out in The Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2022.

The review is considering who is eligible for a card, which services are included in the scheme and how much discount is offered. Once the new scheme is in place it will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is still offering discounts for the most appropriate services and to those who need them most. Until that review is complete, Councillor Sheppard was not going to pre-judge its recommendations.

There had been an open invitation to join the working group on this matter but no one from the Conservative Group, Liberal Democrat Group or Rotherham Democratic Party Group had joined. Councillor Sheppard stated that this was a shame as all views were welcome.

In her supplementary, Councillor C. Carter stated that in the Liberal Democrat budget amendment it had been proposed that the Rothercard scheme be extended to include discounts for Garden Waste Collection. As people were really feeling the squeeze, could this be reconsidered as part of the review?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that all services were being reviewed as part of the review to ensure that the Scheme was right and offered what was needed to the residents of Rotherham.

28. Councillor Monk: Can the Cabinet Member provide information on how many Rotherham children are in receipt of Free School Meals and how that number has changed over time?

The number of Rotherham children in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) can vary from week to week according to personal circumstances but the core numbers can be measured based on school census submissions from each autumn term.

Between October 2018 and October 2021 the number has risen by almost 4,000 from just under 7,000 to almost 11,000. Poverty and child poverty was increasing. After 13 years of Austerity this had gone from bad to worse.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the Government provided funding through a variety of schemes to enable the provision of FSMs during the school holidays. The number of children and young people receiving these FSM vouchers during the school holidays has risen from 10,159 in December 2020 to 11,986 in the 2022 summer holidays. These FSM holiday vouchers also included eligible sixth form and college students, as such the numbers of vouchers provided is higher than normal.

Whilst the numbers of children in receipt of Free School Meals was high, Councillor Cusworth explained that the truth was that the threshold to be able to receive FSM was incredibly low and the annual income needed to be lower than £7,400. This meant there were many more additional families that were struggling to provide their children with a school meal. There had been an article in the Guardian newspaper that reported some children had resorted to eating rubbers, hiding in the playground and pretending to eat from empty lunch boxes to hide the fact they had no lunch.

Councillor Cusworth was so proud of the work done in Rotherham to provide a further £900,000 from the Household Support Fund to provide FSM's through to 2023. However, she noted that she was also heartbroken at the amount of poverty that was being seen. The Local Government Association has been urging the Government to review the threshold that had not been changed since 2019 and to also consider automatic enrolment.

82. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.