

**THE CABINET  
18th September, 2023**

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Beck, Cusworth, Lelliott, Roche and Sheppard.

Also in attendance Councillor Clark (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen and Brookes.

**45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations of interest were made:

<b>Member</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Interest Type</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
Councillor Sheppard	Minute No. 56 Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Selective Licensing	Personal Interest	Personal property is within Parkgate which is within a Selective Licensing designated area.

**46. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The first question was from Mr Tareen who referred to a previous Cabinet meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023 and the request for a meeting with the Muslim Burial Council which took place on 5 September 2023. Mr. Tareen expressed his gratitude for the arrangements and the positive meeting that took place. He, therefore, asked if he was able to have a recording of the meeting and for an update as to the time of a further meeting scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 which it was hoped the Muslim Burial Council would be invited.

The Leader had yet to catch up with officers following the meeting but welcomed the news that the meeting had been positive. He would provide an update in due course.

In addition, the Monitoring Officer confirmed a call for items for the agenda of 5<sup>th</sup> October would be circulated shortly.

In the second question Councillor Ball explained he understood that several Councillors had been prevented from standing in next year's local elections by the National Labour Party including it was alleged, the Deputy Mayor, at least one Cabinet Member and also the Chair of Planning, in addition to one Member who had already resigned forcing a by-election.

If this was correct, why, if the Labour Party deemed them not fit to be Rotherham Councillors, were those Members still in their positions this morning?

The Leader declined to comment and would not speculate on an ongoing Labour Party process. However, he confirmed that no-one had either been selected or de-selected by the Labour Party at this moment in time.

Councillor Sansome had clearly stood down from the Council and had his own reasons for doing so.

In a supplementary question Councillor Ball asked if those Members were deselected would the Leader remove them immediately and put out a statement to the public and Elected Members to say what had changed from 2016 after the Casey Report and now?

The Leader again reiterated that he would not speculate on an ongoing Labour Party process.

In the third question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester confirmed that later on today the results of the latest ballot for industrial action by Grave Diggers at East Herringthorpe Cemetery would be known and he asked for an assurance that should there be any disruption to services that Dignity would face any financial penalties. It was Dignity's responsibility to maintain good industrial relations with their contracts and their people.

The Leader expected that the contract applied in full and would still continue to have the same expectations. He was uncertain if there were contractual provision for industrial action.

The Monitoring Officer advised that a response would be provided on the specific points raised to ensure contact advice offered was accurate and confirmed that the Council would be liaising with Dignity to ensure that any disruption to service was minimised to those who were bereaved.

The final question was from Councillor Tinsley who referred to the Selective Licensing report on the agenda. He noted that the latest figures for HHSRS Inspections 715 out of 2,185 completed. Of the inspected properties 16% have been found to have category 1 hazards and 39% with category 2 hazards do you think with the backlog of inspections and percentage of category hazards already identified that this could constitute a Selective Licensing crisis.

The Leader advised that he did not feel this constituted a crisis but that it demonstrated that the Council were right to implement a Selective Licensing Scheme in those areas. A high number of issues with properties in these areas have been identified and the Policy means that improvements for tenants are able to be implemented in these areas.

The Leader advised that this also illustrated challenges with the way Selective Licensing Legislation was formed in so far as the Council were only able to charge to landlords the costs of administering the Scheme. The Scheme had to be self-financing meaning that there were limited resources available to undertake inspections. This meant that the team had to prioritise activity.

Councillor Tinsley noted that additional challenges had been seen e.g. Covid Outbreak which had limited inspections. He said it would be usual for these houses to be inspected twice, however, they had only been inspected once which was below 50%. He asked if the Leader thought the Council should be providing more resource to get these inspections done so at least one inspection has been completed. He also asked if the Leader agreed that more information be given to residents so they were not sat waiting for inspections to take place and they can raise any property issues as they came along.

The Leader said he would take forward the request to provide additional information to tenant on how to raise concerns if this was an ongoing problem.

The Leader said that all would want the Selective Licensing Team to be fully resourced to the point where it was effective and at the end of the 5-year cycle could reduce the Scheme. However, the Leader noted that the challenge with this was where the resources would be taken from to increase this area.

The Leader said he felt the team was doing a good job and improving people's homes within the resources available to them.

The Leader said he was happier having the conversation now than with the previous opposition who opposed the scheme altogether.

**47. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 August 2023 be approved as a true and correct of the proceedings.

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

The Chair advised that appendices to Minute Nos. 58, and 59, contained exempt information, however, the meeting remained open to the public and press throughout.

**49. PUBLIC HEALTH PROPOSALS TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL GRANT 2022-25 - ANNUAL UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the report which provided Cabinet with an update on the last year's activity regarding the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) grant for Drugs and Alcohol. The grant was initially awarded to 50 local authorities as accelerator sites to combat drugs and alcohol. The report outlined the activities to date and the proposals for Year 2 (2023/24) of the grant which were agreed by the Combatting Drugs Partnership, an officer decision and OHID.

In July last year Cabinet accepted the Drug and Alcohol Grant funding and the spending proposals outlined in the Cabinet report 'Public Health Proposals for Drugs and Alcohol Grant 2022-2025'. The present paper provided an update on those proposals and an overview of progress and achievements of the grant spend.

Section 2.5 of the report outlined a number of the work streams which were all progressing with the exception of the Dual Diagnosis Social Worker stream where 2 recruitment exercises yielded no successful candidates. Discussions were taking place to determine next steps.

Delivery through the reprofiling of spend had included additional workforce training packages, drug awareness resources for young people, 20 additional places for inpatient detoxifications and an online alcohol intervention tool (DrinkCoach).

Section 2.9 and 2.10 of the main report detailed why those outcomes were not at the preferred stage. It was noted that whilst this had been made part of a 10-year national strategy, that there was currently no certainty of any funding beyond 2025.

The Director of Public Health reinforced the progress being made regarding drugs and alcohol due to the investment. He noted that some levels of underspend were bound to happen and the ability to continue to make sure that the funding was invested within aspects that supported the plan in Rotherham was really important.

Resolved:

1. That this report be accepted as the first annual update on the 3-year outlined grant plan for use of the Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant as set out in July the 2022 Cabinet Paper.
2. That Cabinet note that the Council was in year two of the current three-year grant commitment. Whilst this has been made as part of a 10-year national strategy, there is currently no certainty of funding beyond 2025.

3. That Cabinet chose to continue to support the reprofiling of spend across the agreed Grant Plan categories to mitigate the risk of underspend and returning unspent grant to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

## **50. STAG WILLOW EXTRA CARE SCHEME**

Consideration was given to the report which noted that Oaktrees was built as an extra care scheme in 2006, by Together Housing, Housing Association, on land leased for 125 years from the Council with a condition, that it was only used for social housing. Any change of use would need to comply with that condition.

The Scheme comprised a main building (referred to as the Oak Trees Resource Centre) which contained the typical communal facilities associated with an extra care scheme and 8 individual flats. Adjacent to the Resource Centre were 20 bungalows.

The Resource Centre was closed in 2020 and whilst options were considered, tenants of the flats and community centre were rehoused. The Together Housing sustainability options appraisal considered 6 options in total before reaching a decision.

It was understood that to remodel or rebuild the resource centre would have proved exceedingly expensive. Section 2.3 of the report indicated there was a high demand for Council housing for those aged 55 with over 12,000 bids in 2021.

A recent survey showed that 13% of tenants made a trigger call at least once a week, 61% indicated they would only make a call in an emergency and 26% had never made a trigger call. It was noted that calls could be readily responded to by Rothercare, and the recommendation was that Adult Social Care continued and provided for those existing tenants who required support, however, this would not apply to new tenants unless there was an assessed need.

The Council had full nomination rights and a number of consultation exercises would be undertaken if approved. Two options had been considered with Option 1 being the preferred option.

The Assistant Director Adult Care and Integration explained tenants had been briefed in August on the proposals and planned changes. Understandably there were some concerns around ongoing support for tenants in the scheme who had adult social care needs so a commitment had been made to complete Care Act assessments for those individuals who may require an increased or more intensive level of support to the wrap around service provision.

The Leader clarified that tenants who were already in place there would continue to receive support in the same way. There would be a change to the building, which was currently out of use.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the decision by Together Housing to permanently close the Resource Centre and the change in type of housing scheme from Extra Care to General Housing.
2. Approved the permanent change in service delivery to an offsite wrap around care and support service in line with the current delivery model.

**51. RE-PROCUREMENT OF A LOCAL HEALTHWATCH SERVICE**

Consideration was given to the report which noted that the Health and Social Care Act 2012 made having a local Healthwatch a statutory service and it was the role of the Council to set up that statutory service. Healthwatch Rotherham was expected to be the local consumer champion for patients, service users and the public covering both health and social care, for all ages including children. It was also expected, in future, that they would become a member of the Integrated Care Partnership as well as integrated care system and the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was confirmed that they were already a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The main statutory functions were to obtain the views of people about their needs, their expectations, their experience, make reports and recommendations about how those services could be improved or whether they should be improved. They would promote and support the involvement of people in the monitoring, commissioning and provision of local health and social care services via information and advice to the public. Along with making the views and experiences of people known to Healthwatch England.

The Healthwatch service currently in Rotherham was delivered under the brand Healthwatch Rotherham by Citizens Advice. During the time they have had the contract they had undertaken research. They had published a wide-ranging number of reports including accessing dentistry, GP surgeries, and health and social care information. They had explored barriers to accessing Mental Health Services. They had assessed the experiences of Maternity Services in Rotherham amongst other areas.

The current contract for provision of local health was in place until 31 March 2024 and a formal procurement process was now required to secure ongoing arrangements after that date.

The suggested increase in contract value was due to the recognition of increased responsibilities of local Healthwatch brought about by the Health and Care Act 2022, in particular to be involved in the Integrated Care Partnerships and to develop an Integrated Care Strategy and attend partnership meetings along with sharing system wide relevant reports and recommendations.

Two options were considered, given the statutory nature of the service. The first was to undertake a competitive grant process which carried significant risk to the Council should the service performance deviate from the standard required. This option was not recommended. The recommendation was for the Cabinet to approve the undertaking of a competitive procurement exercise to establish a contract to deliver local Healthwatch service via a competitive tender exercise. Application submissions would be assessed on their track record and achievements, approaches for delivery of the new contract and against the objectives of the Integrated Care Partnership Board's and working with neighbouring Healthwatch England to engage with all local people, including those with disabilities or disadvantages.

If approved, the tender would be published late September 2023 and awarded in December 2023 to allow any transition to a new organisation, if required by April 2024.

The Assistant Director Adult Care and Integration explained the main point was around the funding and the increase to the funding envelope to make sure a service could be procured that could drive forward those statutory responsibilities that Healthwatch should be able to undertake.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Approved Option 2 to procure a local Healthwatch Service for a contract period of 3 years from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2027 (with an option to extend for a further year).
2. Noted the increase in the contract value.

## **52. NEW APPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS RATES RELIEF**

Consideration was given to the report for new applications for business rate relief. Section 1.2 of the report details the organisations which were Labre's Hope Community Interest Company, the company of Beacon South Yorkshire Ltd, Miramar Judo Academy Ltd and Unity Boxing Centre CIC.

The applicants had completed the full application form and met the criteria and assessment therefore it was proposed that the applications be approved.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for Labre's Hope Community Interest Company, Beacon South Yorkshire Ltd, Miramar Judo Academy Ltd and Unity Boxing Centre CIC in accordance with the details set out in Section 6 to this report for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years.

**53. POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2023-APPROVAL FOR CONSULTATION COMMENCEMENT**

Consideration was given to the report which was to provide information regarding the statutory review of polling districts and polling places that must take place within a 16-month window between 1 October 2023 and 25 January 2025 and to seek approval for the proposed timetable.

The report set out a number of key issues that the Returning Officer must consider in the initial proposals of the polling district and polling schemes. Finding the time to conduct the statutory review was severely restricted with scheduled elections and a Parliamentary General election due to take place within the 16-month review window.

Following the consultation, the final recommendations would be submitted to Cabinet and Council for approval.

The Leader explained that Appendix 4 of the report detailed a number of the changes being considered. These were minor changes.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the information in this report regarding the scope of the review.
2. Approved the timetable for the review, as set out in Appendix 2.

**54. DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

Consideration was given to the report was to provide an update on progress on the Rotherham Digital Inclusion programme. This was established in 2021 to tackle inequalities and digital exclusion and the funding was provided through the NHS Digital Aspirant Programme grant, RMBC Capital Digital Strategy, and 2021/22 Council revenue budget.

The Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group currently consisted of representation from different organisations within the Rotherham Place including AGE UK Rotherham, Rotherfed, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), NHS, RNN Colleges and Rotherham Council along with engaging with key stakeholders including older people, people living in deprived areas or disadvantaged



groups, along with areas of concern which were East Herringthorpe, Rotherham Central, Thrybergh, and Maltby East.

The Council wanted to ensure this was co-produced with key stakeholders which would involve some outreach work ensuring that no-one was left behind. It would also include evaluation and monitoring of progress going forward.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), who felt it was a clear report. Questions were asked around consultation, how the locations were chosen, how the seldom heard groups were reached, and OSMB felt positive that the student volunteers were available. Clear and satisfactory explanations were provided. OSMB reviewed the report and supported the recommendations.

The Leader noted that 2 members of staff were being recruited so the actions, which had already begun, would be stepped up over the coming months.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the work undertaken to date as part of the Digital Inclusion programme.
2. Endorsed the co-designed Digital Inclusion Strategy and support the approach being taken to help people and communities who are most at risk from digital exclusion.

## **55. JULY 2023-24 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report which was the financial position at the end of July 2023 including the forecast for the remainder of the year. It estimated an overspend of £4.5m for the financial year, which was largely due to demand-led pressures on children's placements, demand-led pressures on home to school transport, the impact of inflation and the economy generally regarding food prices. The current economic climate remained turbulent. The Council had some mitigating factors. There was also overall funding uncertainty for the local government sector beyond 2023-24 as the local government settlement was only for one-year allocations.

The Leader noted this was quarter one monitoring data but there were clearly considerable demand pressures continuing with services and some uncertainty around funding going forward.

The Assistant Director Finance explained that an intensive review of current forecasts had commenced with the Strategic Directors to ensure the Council could be as robust as possible moving forward for the rest of the financial year.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £4.5m.
2. Noted that actions would continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it was possible that the Council would need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2023/24 financial position.
3. Approved the capital budget variations as detailed in section 2.61 of the report.

**56. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - SELECTIVE LICENSING**

Consideration was given to the report which was a good example of cross party working and it was felt it was very timely for this to be considered. The Council had limited powers over private landlords, but a huge chunk of housing was provided by the private rented sector. Selective Licensing was one thing the Council could do to look at housing which was below standard.

The review looked at how the scheme was aimed at keeping landlords accountable and holding them to maintain decent standards in rented properties within those designated areas.

The review found that some people thought Selective Licensing was regarding aesthetics, about regeneration, about schemes of environmental improvement, however the funding was around keeping people safe.

The report showed the inspections delivered by the service were working and hazards were being found and notices had been served to put those right. The potential impact of improving people's health and safety was significant where those inspections had been carried out. Members of the review did feel the service was struggling, the progress with inspections was behind schedule and it was recognised that there was a difficult period during the pandemic, which was outside of the services control. It was felt there was difficulty in getting and retaining the right number of skilled people required for the task at hand.

The inspections were deemed even more important during the cost-of-living crisis with more homes at risk of damp and mould. It was felt more could be done to understand the impact of the service, what it delivered, and what it did to try to keep people safe.

The review recommended a more joined up approach across the Council, working with internal services and with the community, more effective engagement. Communication and engagement with this group needed to be increased.

The people who participated in the review were thanked for their time. The recommendations were around targeting resources where they were needed, around working with landlords to get reassurance that things were working well. It was also around engagement and identifying other gaps, including issues around financial inclusion.

The Leader noted that it looked a very thorough review with Cabinet's response to following in November 2023.

Resolved That:

- 1) Cabinet noted the following recommendations for consideration and response.
  - a) That reinspection be prioritised for landlords whose properties have required action previously.
  - b) Consideration be given to how the Council may support retention of experienced inspectors already in the Council's employment.
  - c) That consideration be given to incentivising responsible landlords, and, where there is a proven track record, empowering landlords to self-assess, provided that the service can still obtain assurances that decent standards are maintained.
  - d) That consideration be given to managing expectations around selective licensing as a measure focused on the health of residents, rather than aesthetics or regeneration.
  - e) That consideration be given to how uptake of the cost-of-living support offer among families in selective licensing areas may be further promoted and monitored, with a view to identifying gaps and promoting financial inclusion.
  - f) Given the complexity of measuring impact on deprivation and difficulty in improving relative levels of deprivation, that consideration be given to how internal measures may better reflect the real impact of the scheme.
  - g) That a joined-up approach be sought with relevant Council strategies and services, with partner and voluntary sector organisations and with resident-led initiatives prior to any future selective licensing declaration.

h) That engagement with landlords and with tenants be considered alongside any response to the above recommendations, and that the response to the above recommendations be subject to the learning derived from continued engagement with landlords and tenants.

2) Cabinet responds to the recommendations by November 2023 in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

## **57. DAMP, MOULD AND CONDENSATION POLICY**

Consideration was given to the report which explained the policy set out the Council's approach to supporting residents prevent, identify and deal with damp, mould and condensation in their homes. It also set out the Council's responsibilities both as a landlord for 20,000 households and as the enforcement body for private sector housing.

Damp and mould were unpleasant and unattractive, but it could also be extremely harmful to health and wellbeing. It could trigger respiratory infections and worsen asthma and allergic conditions and in the most serious cases it could lead to serious illness or even sadly death.

This issue was brought into focus a couple of years ago now, following the coroner's report into the tragic death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who lived with his parents in a housing association home in Rochdale. The report found the cause of death was a severe respiratory condition cause by the presence of mould in the home. The property had inadequate ventilation and was not equipped for normal day to day activities which led to excess damp and mould and the landlord placed too much emphasis on the parent's lifestyle, which was the landlord's term, and were too slow to implement remedial works.

Sadly, the Ombudsman had noted that those sorts of practices were not isolated to that landlord, that it had dealt with hundreds of maladministration complaints over the years and while there were a range of factors at play, a common theme was the issue of culture and lack of clear expectations on landlords. Too often landlords were jumping to blaming tenants, instead of recognising the root causes which might include poor energy efficiency, structural issues, lack of outside space to dry washing or fuel poverty.

In Rotherham, all reports of damp and mould were taken seriously, and the Council aspired to adopt a zero-tolerance approach. Since 2017 the Council had invested over £14m in everything from mould treatment work to damp proofing through to extractor fan installations and insulation programmes. It also had an active programme of inspections for private sector housing. This was not a new approach but there had been a significant increase over the last couple of years.

The policy would include a set of principles to guide all the work, as well as detailed procedures for dealing with issues when they arose. The regulations in this area were evolving so the report also sought a delegation to enable small changes to be made as regulations were issues enabling the Council to react quickly as a landlord and as an enforcement body.

The draft policy was consulted upon with residents, including the Housing Involvement Panel and members of the Rotherham Strategic Housing Forum. Landlords were also consulted, and the draft policy was considered by the Improving Places Select Commission with their comments being included.

Councillor Cusworth welcomed the separation of the policies, and clarification was sought as to whether partners in housing associations and other organisations were as dedicated to mitigating this?

The Assistant Director, Housing believed they were, and all social landlords had been asked to develop their own policy for their properties. There would be some minimum regulations that applied to everyone however the Council had also tried to incorporate what they wanted to do for private tenants. The Strategic Housing Forum would be used as a mechanism for monitoring.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the specific Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy.
2. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to alter the Policy to bring it into line with forthcoming new legal time limits for social landlords to address damp and mould, if required.

## **58. MAINLINE STATION UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the report which noted that connectivity was the key to unlocking employment opportunities and investment opportunities. Economic and regeneration development would be stifled without having a good transport network.

In March 2022, Cabinet approved the acquisition of one property and since then work had continued to design the station and the Masterplan had progressed. Additional land requirements had been identified as essential. The report provided an update on that project and sought approval to acquire land needed to deliver the new mainline station. It sought approval to acquire four additional properties, two were essential for the station and two more which would be beneficial and could potentially become essential as the project developed.

The Leader felt it was the most significant project for the Rotherham economy that the Council was able to undertake at the current time. If agreement from Government and the necessary funding was put in place it would have a massive impact on the opportunities for jobs and leisure for Rotherham's residents. He noted that the Council was some way off delivering the scheme in the way it was hoped, there was funding that was secured through the Town's deal to start pulling the site together hence these proposals were being considered. It was national infrastructure meaning it was not within the Council's gift to be able to deliver the whole scheme, but it was something the Council would continue to press Government for.

The Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration & Transport noted it was part of the long-term strategy and plan but highlighted that the report covered the next steps and timelines. The outline business case was being compiled, working with Network Rail and other key partners to get it in a position to be submitted early next year.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Authorised the Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport to negotiate the acquisition by agreement of the property interests in Appendix 1 Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 and within the available funding, in consultation with the Council's S.151 Officer, Assistant Director, Legal Services, the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, and the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment.
2. Granted a Resolution in Principle to investigate the use of powers, under either the Compulsory Purchase Order or Transport and Works Act Order, to acquire the necessary property interests.

## **59. COUNCIL BUILDING DECARBONISATION PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the report which noted that the Council declared a climate emergency in October 2019. In 2020, Cabinet resolved to be net zero as a Council by 2030 and as a borough by 2040. A significant challenge in delivering the action plan was the reduction in emissions from its own buildings, which could include any or all of the following, such as LED lighting, improved insulation, double glazing and solar panels. Government funding was received to enable the decarbonisation of buildings and Cabinet approved £6.4m to begin the decarbonisation work.

Approval was sought for the work needed in five buildings, which included, the Town Hall, Riverside House, Civic Theatre, Clifton Park Museum and the Orchard Centre. In addition to the decarbonisation of the buildings there was a need to find an alternative heat source for the buildings from those currently used. A head source network could be considered but in order to connect to one, the Council would need to

secure a partner, as there wasn't a heat source network in the borough currently. The report was seeking the procurement of a partner but due to the nature of the procurement specific requirements were needed which were listed in the exempt appendix.

The Leader clarified that Cabinet were approving a programme of works to design and fit LED and solar panel to the five council buildings mentioned. To approve the appointment of a partner to support and advise the development of the remaining operational estate and deliver decarbonisation works contained in the report. To approve the use of the Government grant funding from the public sector decarbonisation scheme as well as the funding put aside to deliver the proposed work and to approve the procurement process as to establish a heat source network or heat delivery contract to provide a heat source to Council owned buildings.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the programme of works to design and fit the LED and Solar PV works to the five Council buildings listed in Section 2.5 of this report to be delivered through a procurement process.
2. Approved the appointment of a partner to support and advise on the development of the remaining operational estate and to deliver the decarbonisation works contained in this report, to the five Council buildings, to be identified through a procurement process.
3. Approved the use of grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and a contribution from the existing Council capital decarbonisation project to deliver the proposed works to the Council's operational property, as set out in exempt Appendix 1.
4. Approved a procurement process to be undertaken to establish a heat delivery contract to provide a heat source to the proposed Council owned properties.
5. Approved that a report would be to be submitted to Cabinet following this process that would detail the outcome of the procurement, its financial feasibility and recommendations for heat delivery for the five buildings listed within Section 2.5.

## **60. JOINT REGIONAL STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

Consideration was given to the report which noted that all Council's had a statutory duty to co-operate when preparing local plans. Local planning authorities in South Yorkshire had worked together in a joint statement of common ground for the region. The statement covered energy, climate change, housing, employment, transport, natural environment, waste and digital connectivity.

This statement had been updated from the previous version, approved in 2019, and covered current challenges with an additional focus on energy, climate change, the natural environment and the waste.

This statement would help all councils in the region as they prepare and reveal their Local Plan as it demonstrates they had met the duty to co-operate at a strategic scale.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Approved that the Council be a signatory to the Joint Regional Statement of Common Ground.

## **61. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**

Consideration was given to the report which noted this was the first time since the period at the close of intervention that the LGA had been back to Rotherham to conduct an independent assessment of where the Council was. It was clarified that it was not an inspection, but it was an opportunity for other people who worked in similar authorities to bring the benefit of their experience to have oversight of what was happening at the Council and provide their view as to where the Council was and what the challenges were.

As a result of things that had happened in the past, the Council also invited Dame Mary Ney, who was one of the Commissioners but was also part of Louise Casey's best value inspection team in 2014/15 to be part of the inspection team. This was done to ensure it was a rigorous piece of work undertaken by someone who knew the Council. It was to ensure someone was part of it who understood where the Council had come from to be able to assess where it was now.

The Leader was pleased to report that a glowing report about the progress made was received. The LGA were able to provide an assurance about the Council's financial sustainability. They were pleased about the ambition and progress made in terms of children's services and that it's always at the top of the agenda. They recognised the significant amount of additional investment that had been secured into the borough over the last few years, which was beginning to transform the communities across the borough. The LGA wanted the Council to do better and make it a sustainable position going forward. A number of recommendations were made. The first was around recognising the progress made and highlighted the need to celebrate that and that the story was told externally so that people knew Rotherham was a good place to live and work and do business. Recommendations three and four were around the future of the economy, challenging the Council to ensure it was getting the full benefit of investment to bring in further private sector investment and jobs over the years to come. Recommendation four was



around effect benefits and pathways for the young people of Rotherham to ensure the investment wasn't passing them by.

Recommendation five was around reviewing performance management to ensure using capacity in the right way for the best benefit of the borough and not spending time reporting back when it's not needed.

Recommendation six, the Peers were asked to look at the neighbourhood working model, which they liked with strong feedback from Members on a cross party basis on the way that Councillors were empowered to work in their communities. The Peers asked that this be strengthened further to consider how the Council worked on a multi-agency footprint to ensure services were being delivered well in localities. Along with ensure online access for residents was as good and as easy to use as it could be.

Recommendation seven was about the financial outlook, ensuring the Council was not being complacent about the financial pressures it continued to face.

The report contained an action plan, which gave high level activities which would be undertaken to achieve those recommendations. The Peers will return in around six months' time to review how they were progressing.

The Leader recorded his thanks to everyone who had undertaken the journey over the course of the last 7-9 years that had put in place such strong foundations for the ambitions the Council had for Rotherham and its people over the years to come.

Councillor Cusworth said she was proud to be part of a capable and effective top team, driving the strategic leadership, demonstrating and remodelling how the Council could work effectively through those member officer relationships.

The recommendations did not contain any surprises, all things that were already being addressed. It was recognised that the Council was working really hard.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), who noted it was a positive report. OSMB concentrate on the recommendations but also considered the action plan. Questions were asked regarding the under representation of people under 25, how private investment would be attracted, and on MTFS and were satisfied with all responses. OSMB Members were pleased it was acknowledged that scrutiny worked well. OSMB reviewed the report and supported the recommendations with the addition that OSMB receive an update on the Council's progress against the action plan, including any next steps following the six-month Corporate Peer Challenge check-in session, which should be provided to OSMB before the end of the municipal year.

Resolved: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the observations and key recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Team to the Council.
2. Approved the high-level action plan which is the Council's response to the findings.
3. That OSMB receive an update on the Council's progress against the action plan, including any next steps following the six-month Corporate Peer Challenge check-in session, which should be provided to OSMB before the end of the municipal year.

**62. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Consideration was given to the circulated report, the contents of which were included as part of the relevant items and the details included accordingly, with the exception of the Financial Monitoring report.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), who raised queries regarding the use of agency staff and the use of hotels and received a clear explanation on both points. OSMB reviewed the report and supported the recommendations.

**63. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Resolved: That the next meeting of the Cabinet be held on Monday 16 October 2023, commencing at 10.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.