

THE CABINET
Monday 12 February 2024

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, 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 Brookes.

133. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

Agenda Item	Councillor	Interest Type	Nature of Interest
142 – Business Rates Discretionary Relief Renewals in 2024/25	Councillor Roche	Non-pecuniary	Trustee – Manvers Lake and Dearne Valley Trust Limited (Manvers Boat Club)
142 – Business Rates Discretionary Relief Renewals in 2024/25	Councillor Lelliott	Non-pecuniary	Trustee – Cortonwood Comeback Community Centre

134. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were six questions from members of the public:

1. Daniel Matthews asked a question in relation to the pavement parking policy and the overt CCTV policy that were both listed on the agenda. He asked how the Council was going to use CCTV as an enforcement tool against illegal parking and vehicle related anti-social behaviour activities. This in particular related to the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) that covered the Town Centre which came into force on 15 January 2024 as this included vehicular based issues. Mr Matthews noted that this was not mentioned in the proposed text that was to be put on the Council's website. Mr Matthews also asked how the Council was going to take on board lessons learned from Sheffield and London boroughs that had the exact same issues as Rotherham in terms of pavement parking and wider crime issues. Mr Matthews stated that the context to his question was that residents and non-residents were

becoming noticeably more fearful for their personal safety in the Town Centre and Wellgate area. He stated that many felt there was no sense of improvement across a whole raft of areas such as Highways, Streetscene, unapproved building works etc which all linked into a wider pattern of behaviour. He also stated that things like begging and harassment in the Town Centre needed cracking down on.

In response to the question, the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment stated that a lot of the issues raised concerned a lot of different duties that the Council had. In relation to pavement parking, the Strategic Director stated that London had different powers compared to the rest of the country, including Sheffield. The policies referenced looked at what could be done within the scope of powers available. Powers for enforcement in relation to pavement parking rested with the police – Council's in England did not have those powers. There had been some consultation from the Local Government Association on giving Council's those powers, but the Government had not yet responded. The Council did have powers in relation to cars driving the wrong way up one way streets and blocking junctions. The PSPO powers were very specific.

The Assistant Director of Community Safety and Street Scene stated that the Council would use any opportunity to use CCTV for enforcement action in relation to crime or civil offences. However, there was still a reliance on the public to make reports as to when and where incidents might take place. That would help the Council make the best use of officer time. There were some challenges, particularly relating to vehicle nuisance. There was often limited audio range attached to CCTV which made providing evidence of that nuisance difficult. The Head of Community Safety also reiterated that there were real limitations on Council's outside of London in terms of how it could use cameras, particularly to enforce parking offences. There were however some cycle lanes that could be enforced.

The Assistant Director of Community Safety and Street Scene confirmed that the Council had continued to invest in CCTV cameras over a number of years to increase that capacity and provide a greater opportunity for the Council to catch offenses.

In his supplementary, Mr Matthews stated that there were a number of matters concerning the community that crossed into so many different departments of the Council. Mr Matthews asked for the Leader and lead Member for Community Safety to coordinate and look to meet with him to discuss cross-department and even a multi-agency approach to restore faith in the Town Centre, both for local residents and those further afield. He stated that people from the wider Rotherham area had concerns about returning to the Town Centre and a resurgence of the Town Centre needed to be encouraged. Lots of work was being done on the Town Centre and was due to be done on Wellgate but that work could be undone by inappropriate and illegal

behaviour. Mr Matthews stated that this needed to be handled and he would welcome the opportunity to meet with those that handled those issues. This would protect the Council's investment as well as the commercial sector. If the Council did not protect itself, there would be a downturn in inward investment. Mr Matthews noted the good things, such as Forge Island.

The Leader stated that he largely agreed with what Mr Matthews had said and clearly, the Council wanted to make sure that it was making people's time in the Town Centre as pleasant an experience as possible as well as giving confidence to those from further afield. The Council wanted to improve footfall in order to help local businesses and create a thriving town centre.

The Leader also reiterated how difficult it was to work across all of the different regulations and legislation in terms of community safety. However all of the relevant teams worked side by side within the Council.

It was agreed that Councillor Lelliott, as lead Member for the Town Centre, would coordinate the meeting requested.

2. Jane Patching asked a question in relation to Herringthorpe Playing Fields. She stated that she was curious about the funding for the maintenance of improvement of Herringthorpe Playing Fields. Ms Patching asked for some figures in relation to what money had been spent over the last four or five years and whether it was felt that the Playing Fields had actually been maintained for recreational purposes? Ms Patching stated that this was something the Council was supposed to be doing.

The Leader stated that he could not provide the exact financial figure but confirmed that the Council did spend a certain amount of money on staffing, grass cutting, maintaining the trees etc, on Herringthorpe Playing Fields on an annual basis. There was also some capital investment that went into the sports facilities (the "stadium.")

The Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment confirmed that the Council was always conscious of making sure that all users of Herringthorpe Playing Fields were consulted on everything that it did. The Council also wanted to make sure that playing fields had the facilities that people wanted and used. Herringthorpe Playing Fields was a big area with a lot of different activities available.

Ms Patching stated that trees had been planted by the Council as part of a royal celebration a number of years ago but about 20% of them were now dead due to a lack of maintenance. When the trees were planted, a number of Council lorries and vans were used and driven across the fields. This consolidated the ground. 20-25 years ago, the Council had invested in improved drainage at Herringthorpe Playing

Fields, but nothing had been done since. Ms Patching stated that, due to the compacting, a substantial area around the paths flooded and covered in leaves and mud that were never picked up or swept. These matters were never addressed unless residents complained.

Ms Patching also had concerns regarding the brown field site that the Council were thinking of building on at Herringthorpe Playing Fields. She stated that a large proportion of the site, at the Boswell Street end, had never had concrete or any permanent type of building on it. It had had aluminium greenhouses, but these had been removed. Ms Patching asked how it could be considered as a brown field site when it was full of natural trees, shrubs, other plant life and animals. She stated that the Council had not used any of the budget wisely in terms of planting and maintaining things and now they wanted to destroy plants and trees.

In response the Leader confirmed that Councillor Sheppard and Officers would pick that up outside of the meeting. He also confirmed that brown field and green field were planning designations. There were already commitments to meetings and conversations with residents regarding that development specifically so Ms Patching would be invited to join those.

3. Henry Marston asked a question in relation to the Boswell Street development at Herringthorpe Playing Fields. He thanked Councillor Allen for the plan that he been sent to him following his question at the previous meeting. He asked if there was a similar plan of the land specified for Herringthorpe Playing Fields in the Rotherham Borough Act of 1928? In relation to the site that was marked out for future proposed development, Mr Marston stated that the only part that was formally nurseries and the depot was on the right but on the left, there was a plateau area with trees that had been planted, where the old pavilion used to be. Mr Marston stated that this was the gem of the Playing Fields for recreation and for people walking through. Mr Marston thought it could be developed with picnic tables but definitely should not be barred to people coming through.

Councillor Allen confirmed that she would raise the matter with officers and see if a map could be found.

In his supplementary, Mr Marston stated that there was land behind No. 69. When the rugby ground had been built, there were problems with access from Badsley Moor Lane due to it being waterlogged in winter. Members of the public were discouraged from going along there and as such, there were drug dealing issues. Mr Marston said that the Council needed to make sure that members of the public could use that access at Boswell Street corner.

Councillor Allen confirmed that she would work with Councillor Sheppard and the green spaces team to look into the issues raised.

4. Farooq Tareen stated that since his last visit to the Cabinet meeting, the 35 year plan for cemeteries across the Borough had been submitted by Dignity. This was submitted on 30 January 2024 and had been compiled by the local manager who had only been in post for the previous seven months. Mr Tareen stated that on page 11 of the report, it said that the area of most concern was within the Muslim sector, specifically the current demand for burial provisions. The report further stated that 20 burials a year were taking place in that section and given the timescales and the time left, the Muslim community were rightfully concerned about running out of space. Mr Tareen stated that more accurate figures should be between 30 and 40 burials given that 10 had already taken place since the start of 2024.

Mr Tareen stated that the report had failed to mention that some graves were still filled with water. The report also failed to mention that, despite the outcry from the Muslim community, both Dignity and the Council had failed to commission a hydrogeologist. The source of water had to be established. Additionally, the report did not mention that, through fines, the Council had received a substantial amount of money to improve the Muslim section of the cemetery but had failed to invest that money wisely on the drainage system and improvements to the landscape. Nothing had been done about the landscape at all except from a path and a rail. A wall had been built to stop the land from sliding away.

Mr Tareen's question was what had the Council done effectively so far apart from hold various meetings without any results?

The Leader stated that he was sorry to hear that there were ongoing issues but confirmed that action had been taken and improvements had been made. Councillor Alam confirmed that the Council were still holding Dignity to account for flooding in the cemetery and were making sure the graves were not waterlogged. The Council were also trying to ensure that services users were engaged in the consultation process. Councillor Alam confirmed that there were issues at Dignity in terms of retaining managers. New managers only tended to stay a matter of months before moving on. As commissioners of the contract, the Council were enforcing that Dignity had to engage with the community and make sure that all of the reports produced were accurate. The 35 year plan had been delayed as it did not contain all of the relevant figures and the Council went back to Dignity to get it updated.

Councillor Alam stated that Dignity would need to look at the drainage system to ensure graves were not being flooded as it was very concerning for the families of those buried in the cemetery and for future burials. As such, the Council would continue holding Dignity to account. The Plan included space for seven years and the expansion that had been agreed was now just for the Muslim section. This was

due to a change in the demographics of the area. Councillor Alam stated that it was his understanding that the figures referenced 28 burials a year for adults with children separate.

The Assistant Director of Legal, Elections and Registration Services explained that, in addition to the approval at Council of developments across the cemeteries, the fines that were received from Dignity were invested into the whole range of Council cemeteries. The investment totalled around £250,000. The work done with Dignity and the community in applying pressure, had resulted in further investment of more than £1m throughout the last 18 months to two years. The Assistant Director did believe that the investment was visible on the ground having visited himself. He recognised and valued the communities involvement in working to get those improvements and wanted to continue working together to make sure the improvements continued.

In his supplementary, Mr Tareen stated that Councillor Alam had confirmed that the report had said there was space for seven years. Mr Tareen challenged that and asked what would happen if the space ran out in the next six or seven months? What provisions were there to bury loved ones?

The Leader explained that it was his understanding that there was already over 100 spaces set out in the plan for Muslim burials. The Council therefore believed there was adequate space based on the trajectories to meet the need in the medium term. There was also then the planning application to expand that further which the Leader hoped would be expedited to give some certainty to the community. There was an on-going issue with the Environment Agency, but the Council were working through that.

The Leader reassured Mr Tareen that the Council certainly did not want to run out of spaces and wanted to ensure that all Muslim burials, along with other burials, took place within decency and dignity in the expected way.

5. Arshad Azam stated that he had attended the scrutiny meeting in December 2023 and was interested by the lack of financial information put forward in the report. It was Mr Azam's understanding that in 2021/22, Dignity were fined £232,935 and in 2022/23, they were fined £328,290. The fact that the fines were going up showed that the service was getting worse, not better. Over two years, that totalled £561,225. It was also Mr Azam's understanding that in 2022, there were seven items that the Council wanted to reinvest in and that totalled £148k. Of those items, four related to improvements around the cemetery walls and accounted for £108k. However the cost had now increased to £193,286 which was an 80% increase on what Cabinet had approved. Mr Azam asked what due diligence was done on the original submission for that money and how it would be

progressed forward?

Mr Azam also referenced the end-to-end review and Mohammed Omar. He stated that the latest response from the Council was that there was no one suitably qualified to undertake the review. That was then coupled with the changes to the medical examiner process that was to be introduced in April 2024. Mr Azam stated that Doncaster had sorted out there processes and Sheffield were piloting their system. Mr Azam stated that he was not getting a clear answer from Rotherham Council on what they were actually doing.

Mr Azam also referenced the 48 graves that were remaining and the proposed expansion options. One was to expand by four rows which would impeach onto the land that was included in the planning application. The planning application process had been ongoing for a year and a half and had not been expedited. The other option presented was to use land across the road that contained a large number of trees. The community had previously asked about that land but were told that the land was used for the throwing/dispersal of ashes and as such was not an option. The report was showing as amber but when Mr Azam spoke to Dignity it was actually red. Mr Azam stated that they were running out of grave space and asked what the timescales were and what was the Council doing about it? Where was the urgency?

When Mr Azam had attended scrutiny in 2022, he had been informed that he could ask multiple questions which he did. However, in 2023 he was only allowed to ask one question with a follow on. In relation to the Muslim Bereavement Liaison meetings, they had previously been fully documented. There was a record of what was discussed, who had said what, what was agreed etc. Now, only an action record was produced. Mr Azam stated that at the last Cabinet meeting, the Leader had stated that if meetings of the liaison group had been missed, conversations needed to take place and the meetings needed to be rearranged quickly. Mr Azam confirmed that it was a month later and Dignity did not have a new manager and the Council did not want to have meetings with the group. He asked how he could raise issues if the meetings could not be rearranged within a month and the next one was not until April? Mr Azam stated that it was woeful and disappointing. He asked how things could be moved forward.

The Leader stated that it was his understanding that efforts were being made to arrange a meeting with Dignity and the Medical examiner prior to the April meeting in order to address some of the practical issues raised. He understood the frustrations and doubts that Mr Azam had but the Leader had some assurance regarding the number of burial spaces and the availability of land.

In his supplementary, Mr Azam asked for some clarity around whether the annex that the planning application was for, was to be used solely

by the Muslim community.

Councillor Alam confirmed that the expansion was for the Muslim community only due to changes in demographics.

Mr Azam asked if the Environment Agency could be invited to the meeting. The Leader explained that they could be invited but they were under no obligation to attend.

6. Saghir Hussain stated that new graves were being dug but were filling up with water and within three days, the whole area was saturated and flooded. As such, that space was no good to use. Mr Hussain's question was why did there have to be a planning application for a graveyard that had been used as a graveyard for the past one hundred years or more?

The Leader explained that the planning application was for land that had not been allocated for burials as part of the process. It was all to do with planning designations.

Mr Hussain stated that it was an existing graveyard and should not require any further planning applications.

135. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 January 2024 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

136. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that there were no items of business on the agenda that would require the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

137. ROTHERHAM EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE STRATEGY 2024 – 2027

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval to implement the Rotherham Early Years Education and Childcare Strategy 2024-2027. The Strategy had been developed to highlight the importance of the early years, the impact of the pandemic, the current position in the Borough, the key priorities and forthcoming changes which would impact the sector. The Strategy set out the expectations for children in the Borough through the vision and identification of key aims.

The government were implementing a significant expansion of early education entitlements which would be rolled out between April 2024 and September 2025 as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of the report. This would enable more children to access a free entitlement but would also require

an expansion of the sector.

Development of a Rotherham Early Years Education and Childcare Strategy would support wider awareness raising of the importance of early years on the outcomes for children as well as the current challenges faced by the sector.

The following factors could impact on the Council's ability to ensure children were able to access their entitlements to ensure a positive impact on outcomes:

- Lack of capacity in the sector to meet the increased entitlements (particularly from September 2024).
- Financial sustainability of day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders was a concern which has been confirmed by the sector. Any loss of provision would increase the capacity gap.
- Lack of availability of suitably qualified early years professionals to support current delivery. The impact would be magnified with the expansion required to meet the new entitlements.

To try and mitigate the above risks, the Council had developed the Strategy aims to ensure that:

- Parents/ carers can access affordable, sufficient, high quality and fully inclusive childcare places that support early learning and working parents/carers.
- Children's early learning and development is expertly supported by a strong, skilled, and knowledgeable early years and childcare workforce.
- Children who may be at risk of poor outcomes are prioritised for high quality targeted support.
- All children have a positive journey through their early years and are well supported to transition to Foundation 2 (Reception).

An action plan was being developed to support achievement of each of the aims and this would be reported to the Improving Lives Select Commission.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approve the implementation of the Rotherham Early Years Education and Childcare Strategy 2024-2027.

138. LOCAL STOP SMOKING SERVICES AND SUPPORT GRANT

Consideration was given to the report which outlined how a grant, provided by the Department of Health and Social Care to support people in stopping smoking, would be allocated in line with the Rotherham Tobacco Control Work Plan. The value of the grant for 2024/25 was £384,845. A similar amount was expected (to be confirmed annually)

each year through to 2028/29, giving an estimated total of £1.92m over five years.

On 8 November 2023, the Government announced a set of Tobacco Control proposals in response to the Khan Review and the Government's ambition to make England smoke-free by 2030. Alongside the proposed legislation to create a 'Smokefree Generation', a ringfenced £70m Local Stop Smoking and Support Grant was announced with the intention of supporting an additional 360,000 people to quit smoking nationally.

The funding provided to Rotherham would stimulate additional quit attempts, link smokers to effective interventions, boost community stop-smoking service (CSSS) capacity, build professional competence, and strengthen partnerships within local healthcare systems. This additional funding was crucial; however, current modelling by Rotherham's Public Health Intelligence team indicated that reaching Rotherham's ambition to become Smokefree by 2030 (<5% prevalence) could require further investment.

The strategic aims and proposed activity included encouraging and supporting smokers to quit for good; reducing variation in smoking rates by tackling inequalities; delivering a coordinated tobacco control policy, strategy, governance and monitoring system and reducing the number of people taking up smoking.

Councillor Roche stated that this was good news for the borough.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Agrees to the proposed allocation of this grant to support the delivery of stop smoking services as detailed across the themes within the Tobacco Control Work Plan.
2. Agrees that the approval of the details of the type of stop-smoking services and their administration is delegated to the Public Health Director in line with the Tobacco Work Plan.

139. LEARNING DISABILITY STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval of the Council's Learning Disability Strategy 2024-2027. In March 2023, Cabinet had given approval from the service to co-produce a future vision and strategy for people with a learning disability. The report also outlined the outcome of a three-month period of engagement on the future vision, values, themes, and priorities.

Engagement took place from 12 July 2023 to 10 October 2023 to seek the views of people with a learning disability, their families, unpaid carers and

partners on the future vision, values, themes, and priorities for people with a learning disability. The engagement was led by a consortium of organisations who worked with the Council. The consortium included Genuine Partnerships, Guiding Voices, Rotherham Parent Carers Forum and Speak Up.

Engagement principles were agreed with the consortium and five core areas of focus were identified. The five areas aligned with the previous Learning Disability Strategy for Rotherham, as well as Learning Disabilities England Good Lives Framework, and the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) pillars for young people preparing for adulthood. The five areas were:

1. Education
2. Employment
3. Housing
4. Health
5. Community Inclusion

Respondents had also identified two overall priorities that were most important to them during the engagement process. These were to turn the Strategy into a longer-term strategy for people with learning disabilities and to provide better quality assurance that took account of what they said. Co-production was also vital. The Learning Disability Strategy therefore prioritised co-production and the voice of people with a learning disability. The Strategy would adopt the Four Cornerstone principles when working with people with a learning disability to deliver the Learning Disability Strategy priorities.

The Learning Disability Strategy and delivery of the priorities would be governed by the Learning Disability Partnership Board which was jointly chaired by the Lead Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and people with lived experience.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People stated that this was a very welcome report and confirmed that the voice of young people had been captured.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approve the new Council Learning Disability Strategy (2024 – 2027).

140. ROTHERHAM ALL AGE AUTISM STRATEGY 2024-2027

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval of the refreshed Rotherham All Age Autism Strategy 2024-2027 and sought acknowledgment of the commitment to develop a co-produced action plan.

The Strategy built on the progress made in the delivery of the Rotherham All Age Autism Strategy 2020-2023 and sets out the strategic direction and priorities for the next three years. This had been informed by the co-production work undertaken with people with lived experience, attached at Appendix 2.

Lived experience, as reported by autistic children, young people and adults was captured in the key areas. The Strategy also identified existing work programmes which were taking place to address areas of development, as it was clear that significant progress was being made and would be further built upon over the next three years.

The following changes had been made to the Strategy, to ensure it remained reflective of the needs of autistic people within Rotherham:

The restructuring of the priorities to the Rotherham Four Cornerstones: Rotherham developed the Four Cornerstones, which were essential for ensuring that the autistic community (children, young people, adults, parents and carers) and the neurodivergent community in Rotherham had an equal voice. The Four Cornerstones were : Welcome and Care, Value and Include, Communicate, and Work in Partnership. This would ensure a golden thread between Children and Young Peoples Services and Adult Services, as well as Housing.

The plan was to co-produce a detailed action plan to address the priorities in 2024. The rationale was to ensure that autistic children, young people and adults with families and professionals, worked together on the strategic priorities important to them and could demonstrate delivery and impact.

To ensure that the voice of autistic children, young people and adults was captured and used to shape the strategy, a public consultation was undertaken by Rotherham Parents Forum Ltd from 24th July to 10th October 2023.

A total of 175 people provided their views and experiences (149 questionnaires and 26 people attended a focus group), of whom approximately 79% identified as autistic. No formal autism diagnosis was required, so this figure also included people who self-identified or were questioning, and their families. All focus groups were with autistic people.

A summary report regarding the co-production was attached as Appendix 2 to this report, and a summary was included as an appendix to the Strategy. The level of involvement of people with lived experience in shaping the development of the Strategy was extensive and would ensure the future strategic direction was reflective of the needs and aspirations of autistic people in Rotherham.

During the meeting, the importance of diagnoses in adulthood was raised. Officers agreed and confirmed that this was an important part of the

Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People expressed her support for the Strategy which was very welcome and positive.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:-

1. Approve the refreshed Rotherham All Age Autism Strategy 2024 – 2027 and acknowledge the commitment to develop a co-produced action plan.
2. Agree to receive a further report in 18 months on delivery against the All Age Autism Strategy 2024 - 2027 and that the plan is to co-produce a detailed action plan in 2024.

141. DECEMBER 2023/24 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which set out the financial position as at the end of December 2023 and forecast for the remainder of the financial year, based on actual costs and income for the first nine months of 2023/24. As at December 2023, the Council Directorates currently estimated an overspend of £9.7m for the financial year 2023/24. This was largely due to demand led pressures on Children's residential placements and home to school transport as well as the impact of inflationary pressures in the economy, particularly on food prices, and the legacy impact of lockdown restrictions on some directorate's services, especially in Regeneration and Environment.

However, this was offset by a £5m corporate budget risk contingency held within Central Services, approved within the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24. In addition, further savings from the Council's Treasury Management Strategy of £3.5m had been generated and taken together, this £8.5m reported underspend in Central Services, reduced the Council's overall forecast outturn to a £1.2m overspend.

There had been a recent announcement regarding one-off extra funding which was estimated to be £560,000 for the current year which would improve the Council's position.

There remained funding uncertainty for the local government sector beyond 2023/24 and 2024/25 as the Local Government Financial Settlement had been only a one year allocation for both these years. The Council would continue to face significant challenges moving forward with the funding of social care. This was illustrated by the volume of Local Authorities across the UK that have recently hit difficult times with a number having to issue S114 notices.

The Cabinet Member for Housing highlighted the recommendation which

sought approval to use the Local Authority Housing Fund, should the Council's bid for £1,366,400 be successful, to support the Council's existing housing acquisitions programme. Specifically, this would enable the Council to increase the size of its temporary accommodation portfolio by 16 properties in line with the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy. If the Council was successful, HRA capital funding would be freed up and reinvested in housing delivery.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £1.2m.
2. Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2023/24 financial position.
3. Approve the proposed use of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) should the Council's bid be successful, as set out in section 2.65.

142. BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RELIEF RENEWALS IN 2024/25

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for the organisations listed in Appendix 1 to the report. This was in accordance with the Council's Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy (approved by Cabinet on 12 December 2016.)

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approve the applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for the organisations listed in Appendix 1 of this report and in accordance with the details set out in Section 6 of this report, for the 2024/25 financial year.

143. OVERT CCTV POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the refreshed Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy. The Council's current CCTV Policy and Guidance (Overt Surveillance) was approved by Cabinet in August 2018. A review of the Policy had been essential to ensure that it is up to date in light of the significant investment made into CCTV and the availability of new surveillance technology. Cabinet were asked to review the refreshed Policy (Appendix 1) and approve the recommendation in order to support the continued control and management of the use of CCTV across the Council.

The Council had an extensive and established approach to the deployment and use of CCTV. It had both fixed and re-deployable public space CCTV cameras installed across the Borough. Fixed system cameras were monitored from the central CCTV control room situated at the Civic Office, Waterdale, Doncaster, and could also be monitored from the Emergency Control Room at Riverside House.

The refreshed Policy provided clarity for the Council, its Elected Members, employees, contractors, and any other parties involved in the operation, management and administration of CCTV systems and recording devices. It also set out the hierarchy of responsibilities which existed to ensure that these systems were operated in a compliant manner.

The review process had been informed by work with internal audit and the information governance unit. Since the previous review of the CCTV Policy there had been an increase in the number of cameras in the Council's possession from 100 in 2016 to over 400 cameras in 2023. In addition, new surveillance technology had come into use including body cameras and dashboard cameras (dashcams). The Council had invested over £918,000 in provision of CCTV since 2022. This had been both Council investment and Government funding through the Safer Streets Fund. Currently there were over 400 cameras that were re-deployable or fixed to be used to deter crime and anti-social behaviour. Where images were recorded that provided evidence of the identity of offenders, then those images might be used as evidence for prosecutions.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approves the Council's refreshed Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy.

144. FIRE SAFETY POLICY FOR COUNCIL HOUSING

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval of the Housing Services Fire Safety Policy which was attached at Appendix 1. The Policy outlined the Council's approach to identifying, managing, and mitigating the risks associated with fire in council-owned residential and associated properties. It set out the roles and responsibilities of the Council in line with legislation and the Council's responsibility as a landlord. The Policy had been developed to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, The Fire Safety Act 2021, The Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 and The Building Safety Act 2022. The risk of fire presented a significant hazard to the safety of homes and their occupants, and it was imperative that there were robust management systems in place to manage fire risk appropriately.

The Council owned circa 19,963 homes including 1,196 blocks containing flats and one high-rise building, Beeversleigh House. These were held in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA also managed non-residential assets including neighbourhood centres, district heating boiler

houses and bin storage areas. Whilst there were robust management systems and processes in place, as well as the corporate Health and Safety Policy, a specific housing services fire safety policy had been developed which outlined to residents and stakeholders how the Council managed Fire Safety in Council homes. The aims and underpinning principles of the Policy were set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report.

A programme of fire door replacements was underway. This was required following changes in legislation which meant that some fire doors that were installed prior to new statutory design requirements were no longer compliant. 1,801 properties were identified with non-compliant fire doors. 1,403 fire doors had been replaced to date, and 398 fire doors were scheduled to be completed. There had been 22 tenants who had refused access.

It was important that tenants provided access to replace their fire doors to ensure their safety in the event of a fire. Therefore, where a number of attempts had been made to engage with the tenant and they had failed to provide access, legal powers would be used as a last resort. On 13 December 2023, the Council put four properties before the Court under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and was successful in obtaining warrants to force entry in order to complete the fire door replacements. The remaining fire doors which required replacement would be progressed to Court.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the Housing Services Fire Safety Policy included at Appendix 1.
2. Delegates authority to the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to alter the Policy to bring it into line with any future regulatory or legal requirements.

145. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the Council's Climate Change activity for the previous year. A full progress report and action plan for 2024/2025 was detailed within Appendix 1 and 2. Key progress was highlighted in the report with respect to the specific themes of:

- Monitoring and measurement
- Energy decarbonisation
- Transport
- Housing
- Waste

- Built & Natural Environment
- Influence & Engagement
- Adaptation

An eighth theme 'Adaptation' was added in the 2022/23 annual report to reflect scientific evidence that some degree of climate impacts were already being experienced and would continue to be felt in the future irrespective of widespread collective carbon reduction.

An update on the Council's action plan to reduce Single Use Plastics (SUP) was also included with this report. Single Use Plastics were of public interest and contributed to the Council's carbon emissions (Scope 3). It was therefore important that the Council continued to remove SUP from its operations and encouraged good practice locally.

The Council continued to administer the successful ECO4-Flex scheme, through which people living in fuel poverty could access energy performance upgrades to their homes. Between April 2023 and January 2024, the Council had approved 452 ECO4-Flex projects, while 134 Households were supported by its Community Energy Support Scheme. The average funding received by each retrofitted property currently stood at £6,745.

Paragraphs 2.51 to 2.59 of the report detailed the action plan for 2024/25.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approves the Climate Change Action Plan in Appendix 2, noting the key achievements and opportunities summarised in Appendix 1 and section 2 of this report.

146. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX REPORT 2024-25

Consideration was given to the report submitted which proposed the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2024/25, based on the Council's Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25, budget consultation and the consideration of Directorate budget proposals through the Council's Budget process alongside a review of the financial planning assumptions within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

In recognition of escalating cost pressures within Adult Social Care, relating to inflation, transitions and rising demand for the service, the Council would provide for approximately £7.5m of additional funding to support the delivery of Adult Social Care services.

In setting the proposed 2024/25 budget, Cabinet were asked to recommend to Council a 3.5% increase in Council Tax, made up of an increase of 1.5% in the Council's basic Council Tax plus an increase of 2% for the Adult Social Care precept. The Budget also proposed a Local

Council Tax Support Top-up Scheme to operate across 2024/25 to provide further support to low income working age households in the Borough to assist them in managing the impacts of the cost of living crisis and support the most financially vulnerable households.

In introducing the report, the Leader explained that since 2010, due to the austerity measures, the Council had needed to make and address significant reductions in funding, reductions in expenditure and services provided and deliver significant savings programmes that taken together were in excess of £200m. Throughout this period the Council had needed to make difficult decisions to ensure that vital services to Rotherham residents could be maintained along with a robust financial position to ensure sustainability of those services. Due to that work, the Council were in a relatively good position, particularly compared to many other local authorities.

The Leader highlighted the increase in resources in the customer contact centre and how this had improved the average time taken to answer calls. As such, the proposals within the budget were to make these increases permanent (as per paragraph 2.7.19.) The Council would also introduce a 50% reduction in the current charge for residents to use its bulky waste service as part of a coordinated campaign to reduce fly tipping (as per paragraph 2.7.16.) There was also a family friendly theme to the proposed budget with baby packs being made universally available for all babies born in the Rotherham district.

Councillor Allen also highlighted the difficult financial position many local authorities found themselves in, particularly those that had had to issue S114 notices. In relation to the Housing portfolio, it was proposed that £30.5m be invested in the Council's housing stock. It was also proposed that additional funding be given for homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation. There was also funding for the Empty Homes Officer within the Strategic Housing and Development team.

In regard to Neighbourhoods, the Council was making a series of additional investments to ensure that every neighbourhood was thriving. This included investing £2m over the next two years in a programme of public realm improvements through the Our Places fund. Councillor Allen stated that she was proud to be associated with this budget.

Councillor Alam stated that this was a responsible budget that created jobs and supported residents. It encouraged digital inclusion and was family friendly. Councillor Alam wanted to place on record his thanks to the Leader and to the Finance service for their work on the budget.

Councillor Cusworth confirmed that the money temporarily removed from the Early Help budget (370k) in 2023/24 would be returned. She also praised the baby pack initiative, which was an investment of £360,000 and praised the good financial decision making that had been done in previous years that enabled such proposals to be put forward.

Councillor Sheppard also praised the very positive budget. Investments would be made in relation to Principal Towns Cleansing, including the addition of three mechanical sweeper posts and associated equipment. Following the devastating floods in October, through the Budget proposals, a further £9.8m would be invested in flood defences to make the borough more resilient to a changing climate. Following the completion of the Section 19 report into the October floods, consideration would also be given to what measures were required to protect the Catcliffe community from the devastating impacts of flooding. Tree service improvements would also be funded, including a new apprentice role. It was also proposed that improvements works be funded at Thrybergh Country Park and Clifton Park Water Splash.

Councillor Lelliott referenced the fees and charges, particularly in light of the development in the town centre. The parking charges in the town centre were exempt from the uplift along with taxi licensing fees. There was investment proposed for the Biodiversity Net Gain Policy. There was also a substantial pot of funding for strategic acquisitions.

Councillor Roche highlighted the significant pressures that were being experienced within Adult Social Care that were outside of the Council's control. There was therefore a need to recognise the escalating demand and market costs within the budget, relating in particular to inflation, transitions and rising demand for adult care. This required the Council to provide for around £7.5m additional funding for the delivery of Adult Social Care services in 2024/25 in addition to the £12.4m provided in the 2023/24 Budget. The additional social care resources provided within the Finance Settlement for 2023/24 were welcomed, but the level of additional funding still fell well short of the national social care funding gaps as calculated by the Local Government Association. Further, the Public Health Grant allocation for 2024/25 was confirmed following the 2023/24 Final Local Government Settlement as £18.004m. This amount had not been adjusted as part of the 2024/25 Provisional Local Government Settlement nor had it increased for a number of years.

Councillor Roche highlighted the positives in relation to the Castle view development, the Better Care Fund and the partnership working across Adult Care. He also thanked the teams involved.

During the meeting, the S151 officer provided an update to the report:

- The final Local Government Finance Settlement had been announced and totalled £470,000. The proposal was that the amount of reserves that were supporting the risks within the budget be reduced by that amount.
- Fees and Charges Schedule – the hot water charge should have increased by 6 pence to £1.07 and the cooking gas charge should have increased by 13 pence to £2.23. This was in line with the

general uplift of fees and charges.

It was confirmed that these updates would be incorporated into the final report that would be presented to Council on 28 February 2024.

The S151 Officer also confirmed that she was very comfortable with the budget that had been proposed. It covered the risks and the Council did not have to take any reactive measures. There were some funding gaps expected in future years but there was no need to react to those within this budget.

This report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board fully supported the recommendations. They were supportive of the baby packs, the proposals for homelessness prevention and the restorative hate crime service. Concerns were raised regarding the expected end of the Household Support Fund.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommend to Council:

1. Approval of the Budget and Financial Strategy for 2024/25 as set out in the report and appendices, including a basic Council Tax increase of 1.5% and an Adult Social Care precept of 2%.
2. Approval of the extension to the Local Council Tax Support Top Up scheme, that will provide up to £121.96 of additional support to low income households most vulnerable to rising household costs, through reduced Council Tax bills as described in section 2.5.11-14.
3. Approval of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26, as described within section 2.6.
4. Approval of the Reserves Strategy as set out in Section 2.8 noting that the final determination of Reserves will be approved as part of reporting the financial outturn for 2023/24.
5. To note and accept the comments and advice of the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer), provided in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as to the robustness of the estimates included in the Budget and the adequacy of reserves for which the Budget provides (Section 2.14).
6. To note the feedback from the public and partners following the public consultation on the Council's budget for 2024/25 which took place from 8 December 2023 to 14 January 2024, attached as Appendix 4.

7. Approval of the proposed increases in Adult Social Care provider contracts and for Personal Assistants as set out in Section 2.4.
8. Approval of the revenue investment proposals set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 2.
9. Approval of the Council Fees and Charges for 2024/25 attached as Appendix 7.
10. Application of the Business Rates Reliefs as set out in Section 2.10, in line with Government guidance.
11. Approval of the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme as presented in Section 2.12 and Appendices 3A to 3F.
12. Approval of the Treasury Management matters for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 9 of this report including the Prudential Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy.
13. Approval of the Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 5).
14. Approval that any changes resulting from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 be reflected in the Budget and Council Tax Report to Council on 28 February.
15. Continuation of the principles and measures adopted since April 2020 to make faster payments to suppliers on receipt of goods, works and services following a fully reconciled invoice as described in section 2.11.
16. Approval of the Budget allocations for the Community Leadership Fund as set out in section 2.9.
17. Approval that the Capital Programme Budget continues to be managed in line with the following key principles:
 - i. Any underspends on the existing approved Capital Programme in respect of 2023/24 be rolled forward into future years, subject to an individual review of each carry forward to be set out within the Financial Outturn 2023/24 report to Cabinet.
 - ii. In line with Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules 7.7 to 7.11 and 8.12, any successful grant applications in respect of capital projects will be added to the Council's approved Capital Programme on an ongoing basis.
 - iii. Capitalisation opportunities and capital receipts flexibilities will be maximised, with capital receipts earmarked to

minimise revenue costs.

18. The following updates were provided during the Cabinet meeting, and it was agreed that these would be incorporated into the final budget report for Council:

- The final Local Government Finance Settlement had been announced and totalled £470,000. The proposal was that the amount of reserves that were supporting the risks within the budget be reduced by that amount.
- Fees and Charges Schedule – the hot water charge should have increased by 6 pence to £1.07 and the cooking gas charge should have increased by 13 pence to £2.23. This was in line with the general uplift of fees and charges.

147. 20MPH SPEED LIMITS AND PAVEMENT PARKING

Consideration was given to the report which outlined feedback received from the recent consultation on the Council's proposed policy in respect of 20mph speed limits. It provided details of the results of the consultation and recommended a version of the Policy for adoption to ensure a consistent approach to the implementation of 20mph speed limits in the Borough. The report also provided an update on the Council's proposed position in respect of handling complaints or requests in respect of parking on footways.

The consultation ran on-line between 24 November and 22 December 2023. Although the stated closing date was 22 December, the consultation was kept open until 2 January 2024 to allow for any late responses to be considered. The public consultation was publicised by press releases which resulted in the publication of articles in the Rotherham Advertiser and the Sheffield Star and resulted in 114 responses being received.

In summary:

- 44.7% of respondents indicated support for the draft Policy;
- 53.5% of respondents indicated disapproval of the draft Policy.
- 1.8% of respondents did not know whether they support or disapproved.

Amongst the 51 respondents supporting the draft Policy –

- 21 made generally supportive comments
- 11 raised concerns regarding compliance
- 3 comments supporting 20mph speed limits in villages
- 2 wanted 20mph speed limits implementing on busier roads

Amongst the 59 respondents disapproving of the draft Policy –

- 21 made general adverse comments, including those outside of the scope of the consultation.
- 14 raised concern about compliance.

- 13 raised concern about journey times and/or congestion.
- 11 raised concern regarding vehicle emissions.
- 7 indicated 20mph limits should be reserved for specific locations, in particular schools.

It was worth noting that, of the 14 objectors raising concerns of compliance, about two-thirds were of a nature where it might be inferred that there would be more support if respondents felt the limit would be effectively enforced. Conversely, two respondents advocating for much wider or blanket application of 20mph speed limits indicated support for the Policy notwithstanding its express precluding of blanket application of 20mph. These discrepancies highlighted the need for caution in interpreting the consultation response.

The recommended option was therefore to adopt the 20mph Policy at Appendix 1, which was based on the consultation draft and included the clarifying amendments which responded to the comments received.

Unless and until the Department for Transport update their position on parking on footways, it was proposed that the Council would continue to consider requests where prioritised through the Local Neighbourhood and Road Safety and Minor Schemes programmes, and where relevant as part of other projects. To inform these programmes, Officers would continue to log requests from the public and from Members, along with hotspot locations identified by the Council's Highways and Parking Services teams.

Through these programmes, localised interventions would be considered on a case-by-case basis. Broadly speaking, potential interventions fell into three categories:

Education and information, including an update of the website to reflect RMBC position on footway parking, and production of printed flyers to be placed on offending vehicles; Physical obstruction (e.g. bollards); and, Introduction and enforcement of local Traffic Regulation Orders.

If approved the Council's website would be updated to set out this position, with the text included at Appendix 3.

During the meeting, a correction to recommendation 2 was requested. It should reference paragraph 2.14 through 2.19, not 2.10 through 2.15.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the findings of the consultation and approves the Policy for the Introduction of 20mph Speed Limits and Zones (Appendix 1.)
2. Approves the proposals in respect of handling complaints or

requests in respect of parking on footways, set out in paragraphs 2.14 through 2.19.

148. HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update in relation to the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) in the Borough. In January 2023 Cabinet considered the options for the future delivery of the Household Waste Recycling Service, in anticipation of the expiry of the current contract in October 2023. The option approved by Cabinet was seeking a novel approach to work with a new contractor, with improved services and equipment, whilst embarking on a programme of work to bring elements of the service back into direct delivery by the Council.

Following a procurement process, HW Martin Waste were awarded the contract to provide the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) service for the next three years, whilst also supporting the Council to develop and implement its in-house delivery model. The services mobilised in October 2023. This report provided an update on the procurement and implementation of the new services and future plans to ensure successful in-sourcing of the service.

The provision of the HWRC service was scheduled to be taken in-house on the 29 October 2026. This provided the Council with a 36-month period to ensure support for the service transition from other areas of the Council including Health and Safety, Human Resources, Customer Information and Digital Services, Communications as well as engaging with external partners such as the Environment Agency.

As part of the budget setting process for 2023/24, capital and revenue investment was approved to facilitate the new HWRC arrangement. The approved capital budget was £2.4m, which included the investment needed for the future in-sourcing requirements. Expenditure to date against this budget was £1.3m.

In addition, the Council approved a revenue investment of £188k for 2023/24 and 2024/25. This was in recognition of the additional costs associated with the new Rotherham contract arrangement and the preparatory costs associated with the transition to an in-sourced contractual arrangement from October 2026.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet note the contents of this report.

149. 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.

150. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**Resolved:-**

The next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on Monday, 18 March 2024, commencing at 10.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.