

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 13 March 2024

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Browne, Cooksey, Elliott, Miro, Pitchley, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Baker-Rogers, Ball and Wyatt.

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

110. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2024

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 7 February 2024 be approved as a true record.

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

112. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no members of the public and press present.

113. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no exempt items.

114. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION, MAYOR COPPARD, SOUTH YORKSHIRE COMBINED MAYORAL AUTHORITY.

The Chair welcomed Mayor Coppard, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to the meeting and invited him to give an overview of his work priorities, prior to him taking questions.

The Mayor thanked the Chair for her invitation to the meeting. He outlined that his attendance reflected his commitment to doing politics differently and being the most transparent and accountable mayor in the country. He listed examples including taking part in monthly phone-ins on BBC Radio Sheffield; holding a series of Mayor's question time across South Yorkshire and attending over 30 public meetings to talk about buses and the challenges faced in South Yorkshire. He had also committed to attend each of the overview and scrutiny committees across South Yorkshire.

It was anticipated that there would be an election held on May 2, 2024 for the Mayor of South Yorkshire, integrating the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions. This had come about because the

Government was satisfied that devolution was working well in South Yorkshire and the partnership was sufficiently mature to combine the PCC role into the office of the Mayor.

A key priority was growing the local economy; the Mayor outlined flagship investments such as Boeing and securing the U.K.'s first investment zone as being major achievements. Other examples included a 10-year £160 million investment in the advanced manufacturing sector, a growth corridor between Rotherham and Sheffield as well as opportunity sites in Barnsley and Doncaster. The South Yorkshire Pension Authority had made significant investment which would benefit communities long-term. In addition, a strategic partnership with Homes England meant investment in local housebuilding.

The Mayor gave details of his plans to improve public transport systems, including bringing the tram and bus network under public control. It was noted that legislation in the 1980s removed democratic control of public transport from local authorities. However, it was noted that the financial picture was challenging.

The Mayor also outlined his ambition for South Yorkshire to be the healthiest region in the country. He noted that a baby born in Rotherham today was likely to die five years younger than a baby born in a more affluent part of the country. It was important to turn this around and that was why SYMCA agreed to provide £2.2 million funding for the "Beds for Babies" scheme, to make sure every child under five across South Yorkshire was guaranteed a safe place to sleep. He expressed support for the Rotherham council's "Baby Pack" initiative to provide all newborn babies within the Rotherham area with essentials.

The Mayor highlighted the work of the Citizens Assembly, which comprised of over 100 demographically representative people across South Yorkshire. The assembly's contributions informed the decisions made on achieving net zero targets. This demonstrated how communities were being brought into conversations about decisions.

He gave assurance that the governance of SYMCA was effective and accountable. He concluded by reiterating his commitment to making devolution work and also gaining additional powers and more control for South Yorkshire.

The Chair invited questions from Board members, taking those which had been submitted in advance first.

Councillor Robert Elliott cited a recent article which reported that Alexander Stafford MP (Rother Valley) had claimed that there were plans submitted to the Mayor for an "Active Travel Neighbourhood in Sitwell and Herringthorpe. More bus and cycle lanes with ULEZ (being) the likely outcome". Was this true?

In response, the Mayor outlined that there were a number of proposals across the Borough for area wide schemes to improve bus journey times and conditions for bus passengers, make public transport work more effectively, and make improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. These were being developed as part of the Government-led regional City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme. He confirmed that there was a budget allocation in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement programme to look at such works in residential parts of Sitwell and Herringthorpe. He stated that it was important to ensure that measures were taken to improve air quality, as required by Government. However, he categorically rejected that this would lead to an expansion of the clean-air zone in Sheffield across South Yorkshire or the introduction of an ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ). He asked that the misleading comments be withdrawn.

Councillor Adam Tinsley asked if the Mayor could detail what the plan for a low traffic neighbourhood in Maltby would entail and what consultation had been carried out with residents and councillors.

The Mayor referred to his previous answer, confirming that there was a programme of work outlined with the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, with the objective to improve conditions for those traveling by bus, as pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. He reiterated that the scheme had been designed in partnership with Government and funding had been released only when the Government was satisfied with the plans outlined. He confirmed that there was budget allocation in the CRSTS programme to look at work in residential parts of Maltby. This was the lowest priority scheme in the programme and its inclusion arose from negotiation with the Department for Transport.

The scheme was not yet designed and would be subject to public engagement consultation from the early stages to ensure it met the needs of local communities, including residents and businesses.

In asking a supplementary question, Councillor Tinsley sought clarification if public consultation would take place locally. He felt it was crucial to seek local views as the areas identified were residential and did not suffer high volumes of traffic. In response, the Mayor indicated that should he be returned to office in May 2024, he was willing to look at how the public can be engaged.

Councillor Taiba Yasseen noted that the Mayor held significant power in making decisions that impact South Yorkshire residents and the allocation of public funds. Given the importance of ensuring these decisions reflected the needs and priorities of diverse communities, how did the Mayor balance decision-making whilst ensuring robust and meaningful community consultation, particularly when considering projects with significant impact on local communities and potentially high costs.

Mayor Coppard thanked Councillor Yasseen for her question. He stated

that democratic control was fundamental to how he wanted to work. If devolution was going to work, people needed to feel that that decisions were taken close to the communities that the Mayor represented. One of the brilliant things he was able to do through his role was to engage through councillors with communities. If confidence with politicians was to increase, there was a need to be clear with people about what was being done and learn and listen throughout the process. The way in which consultation sometimes happened was that a decision was made and then people were asked if the decision was right. It was his view that the process should be reversed. He gave an example of the Citizen's Assembly about how listening to communities could happen in practice.

Councillor Yasseen appreciated his aspiration for doing politics differently. She cited an example of a recent experience with the Mayor's office in respect of cycling routes within the Boston Castle ward. She felt that the community consultation had been poor and had written to the Mayor but had not received a response. In her view there was a disconnect and it worried her that there was a failure to respond when people had reached out to his office.

Mayor Coppard offered a further conversation with Councillor Yasseen to establish what had happened. He accepted that as a relatively new organisation, there were gaps in their systems and committed to learning and understanding where they had got things wrong.

Councillor Miro asked if there was a potential conflict of interest when leaders of the district councils chaired boards and committees within South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, particularly when making decisions that directly impact their own areas?

The Mayor stated that the authority strove for high standards for transparency, openness and accountability about the money it received and how this was invested. Each member of the Combined Authority submitted a register of interests which was published on the website. In addition, members were asked to declare any interest on specific agenda items. Where there was a conflict, the member would not take part in that particular discussion, or the Monitoring Officer would determine the most appropriate course of action. He explained that under the previous governance model, thematic boards were chaired by local authority leaders. However, following the governance decisions taken last year this was no longer the case. Decisions were now taken by the Combined Authority Board, comprising of the leaders of the local authorities and chaired by the Mayor. The Mayor indicated that he was happy to have a further conversation should the Councillor have specific examples.

Councillor Lyndsey Pitchley cited a recent scrutiny review looking at preparation for adulthood for young people with special educational needs and disabilities and the lack of opportunities for many young people with additional needs to access meaningful employment, training or placements. She asked the Mayor to outline how his work addresses this

issue and any future plans to increase opportunities. She also thanked the Mayor for his work around “Beds for Babies” and noted his reference to Rotherham’s “Baby Packs”.

Citing his previous work with the ‘BookTrust’ charity, he noted the commitment of partners in Rotherham to work with families to make a difference. He reiterated that every person needs support to be able to “stay near and go far” in South Yorkshire. The Skills programmes underpinned this. Programmes such as UKSPF, Community Learning and Working Win were supporting individuals to develop the skills and capabilities they needed to access meaningful employment, training or placements. He noted that a skills strategy was to be launched and welcomed views on how this could be implemented to be more inclusive. He noted that South Yorkshire was home to the world’s leading advanced manufacturing sector and there was a training centre which provided opportunities for young people to get world-leading skills on their ‘doorstep’. However, if a young person found it difficult to access training or opportunities on public transport or lacked confidence, its proximity to Rotherham was irrelevant. He outlined that 16% of people across South Yorkshire had no formal qualifications; 43% of the working age population are qualified at level 2 and below; only 51% are qualified to Level 3 and above, compared to a national average of 57%.

Councillor Clark welcomed plans for bus franchising and active travel and their contribution towards net zero. She asked how else was the Mayor was integrating affordability, environmental sustainability and resilience into transport plans – particularly in respect of rail networks? How did plans to reopen Doncaster Sheffield Airport sit alongside net zero targets?

In response, the Mayor outlined that transport was fundamental to the work of the MCA because a bigger and better economy depended upon effective public transport. He referred to evidence that showed that places that thrive had a mass transit network, however South Yorkshire did not have this at the moment. He argued that this was arisen because of the privatisation of the bus market in the 1980s and the failure of the Government to give South Yorkshire fair funding. He highlighted that that residents in the West Midlands Combined Authority received £30 more per person in Government funding compared with people living in South Yorkshire.

Whilst there had been investment in the public transport network, progress had been limited by lack of funding. It was noted that passenger numbers had not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Consequently, profits for private operators had reduced which had led to greater demand on tendered services. This had risen some 300% from £7 million to over £21 million in four years. The intention was to change how the system worked with the franchising assessment processes to use money from profitable routes to invest in less profitable services. This would mean a different model using bus services as an investment in local communities.

The Mayor referenced the extension of the tram train network and the opening of a station at Magna. It was noted that mass transit networks were an important part of net zero solutions. Because of the pioneering tram train technology, there were opportunities to integrate with the rail network across South Yorkshire.

In respect of Doncaster Sheffield Airport, the Mayor accepted that it would be a challenge to achieve Net Zero by 2040, however the plans had huge economic benefits to the region and he supported the airport's reopening. He expressed a view that it was possible to 'fly less, fly better' and still have a thriving regional airport. The advanced manufacturing section was at the forefront of building a sustainable aviation hub. A facility with Boeing was being built at AMRC that would be in the vanguard of designing the future of sustainable aviation. Hybrid Air Vehicles were being developed by Sheffield University that would deliver new aircraft powered by clean energy.

Councillor Elliott noted that plans were being developed for a new mainline railway station in Parkgate. He asked if the plans would include schemes to alleviate the already heavy traffic (sometimes gridlocked) on the roads in the surrounding area, including the Broad Street and Mushroom roundabouts.

The Mayor stated that the new mainline station was a fantastic opportunity for the town and region to re-establish direct rail services to Rotherham and other key destinations across country. The station would contribute to reducing the large productivity gap between Rotherham and the rest of South Yorkshire. He noted that the productivity gap between South Yorkshire and Greater Manchester had widened from 99% to 90% in the last twenty years, which in his view, was partly as a result of poor transport connectivity. As part of the work on the station, there were proposals for a new adjacent tram train stop as well as improvements to bus, walking and cycling infrastructure to ensure that there was a sustainable infrastructure around the Parkgate station. There also plans for a transport assessment which would look at highways infrastructure in order to make sure that local access improved and congestion was not increased. There would be conversations with Council colleagues about these issues.

Councillor Miro referred to questions asked of him as the councillor for Catcliffe, Treeton and Waverley about the poor bus services and different bus routes, and how the provision of appropriate bus stops can be enhanced. Did the Mayor have anything to say to his residents about this? And would he come with me to meet my residents and explain the issues to them in person?

The Mayor would be happy to attend a public meeting on buses. He outlined that there were over 7600 bus stops across South Yorkshire and approximately half of them have got shelters. The infrastructure around public transport in South Yorkshire required a huge amount of investment,

unfortunately the Government did not allocate any funds for this from the recent round of bids. He stated that he was trying to find additional money to be able to invest in the infrastructure to develop better bus stops. He noted that to get people to use buses, a reliable service was needed with stops equipped with adequate shelters, up-to-date electric fleet and real-time data. He committed to having a further conversation with the Councillor about specific concerns.

The Chair opened the floor to questions.

Councillor Joshua Bacon asked about the time taken to respond to correspondence and what action he had taken to improve this since the Mayor had taken office? He also asked if the citizens assembly provided best value for money and if it duplicated the role of elected representatives.

The Mayor reiterated the importance of engaging with communities and putting their voices at the heart of everything the Combined Authority did. He noted that the Councillor was entitled to say that as a direct representative, he had the answers to everything that his residents wanted, however, the Mayor disagreed with this view. He stated that he did not know what everyone across South Yorkshire wanted which was why he chose to engage with councils, community groups, businesses and institutions, and the wider public.

In response to the question about delays in response from his office, the Mayor repeated his offer to hold a meeting. He outlined that whilst the capacity of the MCA had increased, in his view this was still not sufficient. As with all public bodies as a result of 14 years of austerity, there was not enough money to do everything he would like to do. However, were things fell through the gaps he was happy to try and resolve the problem.

Councillor Wendy Cooksey welcomed the £2 cap on bus fares, however tram fares were more expensive. Were there any plans to bring tram fares in line with buses as it was a really nice way to travel?

The Mayor agreed that the aim was to get fares lower and more equitable across the whole system. However, whilst buses remained privately operated, it was difficult to mandate lower fares. It was noted that the tram network would come back under public control later in the month and there was some discretion about fare levels. However, there were still limits on what could be achieved because of financial pressures and the lack of Government funding. The challenge was to increase patronage, thus generating more income which could be reinvested across the network. It was noted that unlike buses, the Government did not offer fare subsidies to tram networks.

Councillor Yasseen made a recommendation that a member seminar is organised in the new municipal year, aimed at understanding the authority's role and its decision-making structures. The seminar would

provide insight into how decisions were made on behalf of the people of South Yorkshire, particularly given the expanding remit of the authority including the Police and Crime Commissioner functions.

Councillor Pitchley asked that future consultation also included young people. The Mayor reiterated his commitment to this engagement, citing examples of how he had worked with young people from Rotherham.

The Chair thanked Mayor Coppard for his attendance at the meeting and hoped that this was the first of many sessions to come. She invited him to return on an annual basis.

Resolved:

- 1) That the South Yorkshire Mayor be invited to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on an annual basis.
- 2) That a member seminar be organised in the new municipal year on the role of the combined authority and its decision-making structures.

115. EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2024-2029

The Chair welcomed Councillor Victoria Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and invited her to introduce the report. Nicola Curley, Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services was also in attendance.

The Cabinet Member was pleased to bring the strategy prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 18 March 2024, noting that scrutiny members had a long interest in the service. She outlined that the Council had continued to invest in early help services and the offer from the wider partnership, whilst many other councils had struggled financially to maintain services. The Cabinet Member highlighted that early help remained a key priority for elected members and officers. Its refresh also included reference to changes in legislation and guidance, namely the McAllister Review, the "Stable Homes, Built on Love" recommendations and the new guide "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023).

She reiterated that early help was a partnership offer, rather than a sole council function. It looked at providing universal and community family help at the earliest opportunity for all children and young people; family support workers to work with families under pressure; and then specialist help to prevent children coming into care. She hoped that the Improving Lives Select Commission would monitor the outcomes of the new Early Help Strategy and hold the Cabinet Member and service to account for its delivery.

The Strategic Director noted that the strategy ran from 2024-2029. Phase 1 would involve detailed consultation with elected members, staff,

partners and children and families to ensure co-design and co-production from the start. New guidance would be considered along with a number of reviews.

The Chair welcomed the development of the strategy and invited questions from Board Members. A discussion on the following issues ensued:

- Clarification was sought on how multi-agency work would be strengthened and how this activity would be monitored. In response, the Strategic Director stated that there were existing, strong partnership arrangements. The next step was how to support communities to work more effectively and help themselves. She referred to improvements in the Youth Justice Service; work in schools; mental health support and improving school attendance.
- In the section “What we know about families in Rotherham”, clarification was sought on the number of households with dependent children and if this was known and how many families had been reached. In the equality impact assessment, it referred to the number of early help episodes but did not directly cite the number of children or families receiving services. The Strategic Director clarified the difference between an early help episode and supporting the widest possible community. She gave an example that 73% of children aged 0-5 years, accessed children centre activities. The universal offer was available to all families and often provided by the voluntary sector. This activity would not be recorded as an early help episode. However, for those requiring additional support or a focused intervention this would be provided depending on need. The fewer early help episodes recorded was seen as evidence that the support provided at a community level was effective. Further work would be undertaken during the first year with partners to establish ‘who does what’ to ensure that interventions were not duplicated across different agencies and clarify definitions and language.
- The development of a SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) hub in the town centre was welcomed. What were the timescales for this project? It was outlined that plans were at an early stage. The building would require remedial work to make it accessible. Existing staff would also need to be relocated. The Strategic Director would provide a written update once plans were clarified.
- It was noted that Rotherham was a signatory to the “Breastfeeding-Friendly Borough” declaration. What action was being taken to make this meaningful? It was outlined that there was more to be done in this area. However, as part of the Family Hubs programme, more staff were being trained to support breastfeeding and each of the children centres were breastfeeding-friendly. Written

information would be provided on breastfeeding-friendly public spaces. The Cabinet Member added that she had been working with the Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Health in respect of the public health focus. She referred to the question at the Council meeting about parents struggling to afford formula milk so it was important to ensure that children were properly nourished.

- Further detail was sought on how information about services were disseminated and families were engaged. Examples were given of innovative outreach initiatives to engage families.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet be informed that the following recommendations be supported:
 - 1) Endorse the Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024-2029.
 - 2) Approves the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Strategy Delivery Plan with the oversight and delivery of progress by the Early Help Partnership Group (EHPG) and the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC).
2. That consideration be given to the inclusion of data relating to the number households with children in a revised version of the strategy.

116. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

The Chair invited Councillor Denise Lelliott, the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy to the meeting. Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment and Louise Preston, the Climate Change Manager, were also in attendance.

The report referred to activity undertaken in the period 2023-24. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the progress made since the Council declared a climate emergency in 201. She thanked the Strategic Director and Climate Change Manager for their work and progress made.

On 30th October 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and set out its action plan covering the following seven policy themes of Monitoring and Measurement; Energy; Housing; Transport; Waste; Built and Natural Environment; and Influence and Engagement.

At its meeting on 23rd March 2020, Cabinet resolved to establish the targets of:

- The Council's carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2030 (NZ30)
- Borough-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040 (NZ40)

A Climate Emergency Action Plan was established, and the report outlined its progress towards the updated Climate Emergency Action Plan reported for the 2023/2024 period.

The Strategic Director outlined that the report was a summary of activity and also detailed an action plan for 2024-25. The report detailed activities around key themes, with the main contributors to carbon emissions for the Council being buildings (including housing stock) and transport. It was noted that a new theme of 'adaptations' had been added this year, examples of which were the decarbonisations of 55 Council office buildings and the ongoing success of the ECO4-flex scheme was cited, through which people living in fuel poverty may access energy performance upgrades to their homes. The report had been submitted to a previous meeting of Cabinet.

The Chair thanked the Strategic Director for his work with the Council over many years and wished him well for the future. The Cabinet Member joined the Chair, in thanking Paul for his leadership, guidance and achievements.

The Chair invited questions from the Board and a discussion on the following issues ensued.

- The role of local government in reaching net zero targets was noted and initiatives such as the installation of more energy efficient boilers were welcomed. However, why had the Council adopted the target of 2030 to reduce its carbon emission to net zero which was 20 years before the Government's 2050 target? By doing this, was the Council investing in non-tangible projects which may not provide value for money rather than taking longer? Clarification was sought if these efforts would make difference to climate change.
- The Cabinet Member asked which projects the Member was referring to in order that a response could be given. She referred to the phrase "think local, act global"; as it was in everyone's interest to work towards a sustainable environment for future generation and action was needed to address climate emergencies now. It would be a dereliction of duty to "kick this into the long grass". She commented on those countries in the developing world which were suffering from the impact of climate change; be it plastic pollution or wildlife and habitat depletion, and the need for all countries to act.
- Further clarification was sought on what evidence was there that the Council's 2030 target would benefit climate change compared to 2040 or 2050. The Member also referred to climate team staff providing training on single-use plastics and if this should be delivered by managers. He asked for the number of staff in the team.

- In respect of the question about the evidential base that 2030 target would reduce the Council's carbon impact, the Strategic Director referred to the Cabinet Member's earlier response, by controlling things locally the Council could exercise its influence. It was noted that partners from both the public and private sectors had pledged to work towards reducing carbon emissions. The Climate Change Manager noted that the Council contributed 2% of total emissions in the Borough. However, the work to get to net zero was substantial, including decarbonisation of buildings and improvements to transportation system and how local people adapt to these changes.
- It was clarified that the climate team was a small team of three staff. The work of its manager was detailed in the report and action plan, including work with children and young people and the provision of training on carbon literacy. The Cabinet Member reiterated that the carbon literacy training was a specialist subject matter, requiring expert input. She clarified that it was not just focussed on single-use plastic but rather the impact of climate change and what mitigations should be made. She challenged the Member to undergo the training. She also referred to the Council's target to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero by 2030 resulted from a motion to Council which was democratically agreed.
- The work with children and young people was welcomed, including the Youth Cabinet and projects linked to the Children's Capital of Culture. It was noted that there was an ongoing commitment to engage with children and young people.
- The importance of councils acting early to address the climate emergency was supported. A view was expressed that there should be greater investment in this area with additional staffing resources. The strategy was welcomed as comprehensive; however, it was suggested that it was more 'output-based' rather than focusing on outcomes. The Member was supportive of the actions taken but wanted to know if and how these were making a difference.
- The Climate Change Manager clarified that whilst she led a small team, there was a wider network of colleagues across each of the directorates who championed specific areas relevant to their area of work. She said that this activity would be captured in future reports. The Cabinet Member added that comparative work with other agencies had been undertaken to demonstrate outcomes, however, acknowledged that this was at an early stage of development.
- Further clarification was sought on the link between the targets in the action plan and priorities articulated in the Council Plan.

Specific reference was made to the reduction in emissions from the Council fleet which had not been achieved which was not reflected in the annual report. In response, it was noted that the introduction of an electric vehicles had taken longer than anticipated, including issues around infrastructure and supply. However, other steps to reduce the carbon footprint had been adopted to mitigate this.

- Councillor Bacon repeated his question about how the adoption of the 2030 would contribute to long term change compared with a later target. Also, he sought clarification how the impact of climate literacy training would be evaluated.
- It was outlined that many local authorities had adopted the 2030 target to articulate their ambition to tackle climate change and 'lead by example'. By doing this in Rotherham, work had been undertaken to understand specific challenges (for example building decarbonisation) and what resources were needed to work towards the target. In respect of the training, it was highlighted that each course was full, showing that it is wanted by staff to support their understanding of their role in meeting the Council's climate change targets. As the training had only been delivered recently, it was difficult to measure its impact. However, it was noted that staff had been delivering on actions such as sharing communications or working on specific initiatives.
- The Cabinet Member repeated that the Council adopted 2030 as its target, following the debate of a motion to Council in October 2019. It was important that action was taken to reduce emissions and invited the Climate Change Manager to clarify what the Council's 2% contribution to carbon emissions equated to. This was outlined that this equated to approximately 7800 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year; this had an impact of the atmosphere, the health of children and young people and the wider population. It was important that action was taken now for future generations.
- In respect of the earlier question about outputs, clarification was sought how the cycle lane scheme (particularly in the Broom Road area and on Sheffield Road) contributed to reductions in CO₂ emissions. Examples were given of additional congestion as a result of building work which would lead to further pollution. How would these emissions be offset? Additionally, how would the modal shift from car to cycle be evaluated? The Member expressed doubt that passive exposure to cycling infrastructure would lessen car use. In her view, she felt frustrated that residents had not been consulted sufficiently on the route. She felt that the contribution of cycle routes to reductions in carbon emissions was misrepresented in the annual report as it did not provide sufficient evidence of how this would happen. She also asked if investment would be better spent on improving pedestrian routes to encourage more people to walk.

- In response, the Cabinet Member reiterated the need to reduce car use in order to reduce CO₂ emissions. She acknowledged that the modal shift to encourage more cycle or pedestrian journeys may take time, however, she supported this if it led to less pollution and improving health outcomes for children and adults with chronic respiratory conditions. She noted that as part of an earlier agenda item the South Yorkshire Mayor referenced that improvements to the public transport network would take time in order to introduce the necessary infrastructure. Likewise, she asserted that the benefits of cycle routes made not be realised immediately. The Cabinet Member firmly rejected that the information on cycle routes had been misrepresented in the report.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member and officer to have further discussions outside of the meeting with Cllr Yasseen on the issues raised.

The Chair thanked Cllr Lelliott for her attendance at OSMB over the previous years.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet's approval of the Climate Change Action Plan in Appendix 2 and the key achievements and opportunities summarised in Appendix 1 and section 2 of this report be noted.
2. That details of the carbon literacy training be circulated to Members in the new municipal year.
3. That consideration be given to how a greater emphasis can be placed on reflecting outcomes (rather than outputs) in future iterations of the Climate Emergency Annual Report.
4. That consideration be given to how relevant targets outlined in the Council Plan and those articulated in future Climate Emergency Annual Reports can be explicitly linked and referenced.

117. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - NATURE RECOVERY

The Chair invited Councillor Adam Tinsley, Vice-Chair of Improving Place Select Commission to introduce the Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Nature Recovery.

The Member outlined that Nature Recovery motion (agreed at the Council Meeting of 25 May 2022) committed the Council to a range of activities, including ensuring its response to tackling climate change was extended to compliment the aligned cause of nature crisis. It also committed the Council to continue its work to enhance biodiversity by adopting innovative approaches to support wild flowered areas and ecological approaches to grounds maintenance.

The review was undertaken by members of the Improving Places Select Commission following its referral from Council. It started its work in March 2023, concluding later in the year.

It was a wide-ranging piece of work which included visits to nature sites, discussions with groups and expert witnesses as well as presentations and discussions with officers to understand the challenges of nature recovery. The review also looked closely at the Environment Act and the enhanced duties for local authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and report on their actions. Alongside this, it examined measures to address the impact of climate change and promote and protect biodiversity.

Councillor Tinsley put on record his thanks to everyone who shared their expert testimony. This included Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust, members of the Rotherham Local Wildlife Sites Panel, South Yorkshire Police as well as RMBC's Green Spaces Team, Ecology and Climate Change staff.

He also thanked Katherine Harclerode for her work in supporting this review and wish her well in her future work since she left the Council.

The report detailed its finding in section 2.3 of the report. As part of its evidence gathering, Members were able to establish what action was being taken by the Council, community organisations and partners to achieve targets and uphold duties under the Environment Act 2021, as well as future challenges.

There were 12 recommendations in total which were outlined in the report. These included:

- That consideration to be given to what resources are required to coordinate the Council's response to the Environment Act 2021, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Enhanced Biodiversity Net Gain, and other statutory reporting.
- Expanding the Councillor's role as nature champion
- How the RMBC 'estate' can contribute to the Council's obligations for the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty
- Continue the positive work underway including tree planting, meadow management, changes in verge management, community engagement etc

The Chair invited comments and questions from Board Members and the following points were made:

Councillor Browne, who was part of the review group, asked that an additional recommendation be considered. He outlined that the timescales and process for setting up a community wildlife site was difficult. He asked

that consideration be given to how the process could be streamlined.

Reference was made to local residents supporting biodiversity in their local area and the hard work to safeguard these “little nuggets”. The additional recommendation was welcomed if it made it easier and more accessible for local communities to work with their elected members to secure sites.

The Chair thanked all members who took part in the review. She noted that because of the shortened year, the review would be submitted to the first meeting of the Cabinet scheduled for June 2024. It would be submitted to Improving Places Select Commission at its next meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the report and the following recommendations be received with the addition of the recommendation 13):
 - 1) Consider what resources are required to enable RMBC to lead on the Nature Emergency and co-ordinate its response to the Environment Act 2021, including the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Enhanced Biodiversity Net Gain, and other statutory reporting.
 - 2) In line with the RMBC Nature Crisis Motion (and the mandatory Enhanced Biodiversity Duty), consider how RMBC’s response to the nature crisis can be implemented, reported, and resourced (taking note of the response to climate action).
 - 3) Consideration be given to the expansion of the Councillor’s role as nature champions. This to include:
 - a. How member stewardship of natural assets and geodiversity and be enhanced.
 - b. How nature recovery and climate action can be built into ward plans.
 - c. The involvement in overview and scrutiny in future monitoring and steering of this work.
 - d. Support through the Member Development Programme to ensure Members are equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge to undertake this activity.
 - 4) Contribute to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (including appropriate resourcing) detailing Rotherham’s involvement in meeting South Yorkshire national and global targets of “30 x 30” as required by the Environment Act 2021.
 - 5) Consider and plan for how the RMBC estate including all green and blue infrastructure such as allotments, cemeteries, parks and sports fields, amenity spaces, communal gardens, railway and highway verges, field margins and hedgerows, rights of

- way and access routes, woodlands and nature reserves canals, rivers and other water dependent habitats; can contribute to biodiversity strategies and targets; demonstrating compliance with the Councils obligations for the Enhanced Biodiversity Duty (taking external advice where necessary).
- 6) Prioritise Local Wildlife Sites and Woodlands - especially those in RMBC ownership- to contribute to these targets, with a coordinated 'one council' programme to increase their positive conservation management with resourced management, monitoring and reporting.
 - 7) Continue and expand the positive work already underway including tree planting, meadow management, changes in verge management, community engagement etc (as stated in the RMBC Nature Crisis motion)
 - 8) Utilise appropriate evidence and information from the forthcoming Rotherham State of Nature report, alongside the forthcoming SYLNRS, and the agreed priority species lists, to set local species recovery targets and work plans, and ensure sufficient resources are secured to embed this approach in long term management opportunities.
 - 9) Continue to apply robust planning policies and other policy tools to contribute to nature's recovery across the Borough, noting that Local Planning Authorities must have regard to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy once published.
 - 10) Plan to work towards zero non-essential use of pesticides and zero glyphosate by the Council;
 - 11) Work with communities to support expansion of household composting, and supporting the development of nature rich gardens, including through awareness raising of the waste hierarchy and minimising the use of new and scarce resources and the associated impacts on the natural environment that these issues have; substantive resourcing and engagement plans will be essential.
 - 12) Work with partners, stakeholders, Parish Councils, communities, schools and residents on the above where appropriate.
 - 13) That consideration be given to how the process for the adoption of community wildlife sites be streamlined.
2. That the report, as approved, be forwarded to Cabinet for its consideration.
 3. That Cabinet is asked to formally consider its response to the above recommendations within two months of its receipt, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

118. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme. The Senior Governance Advisor outlined items to be referred to the work programme for the next municipal year.

- Bye-laws and life saving equipment
- Flooding (possibly with Improving Places Select Commission)

Consideration on the actions arising from the petition considered by Council on 28 February would be concluded prior to the end of the municipal year.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

119. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

The Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission made reference to the spotlight review on Preparation for Adulthood. Its recommendation would be submitted in due course.

The Chair of Health Select Commission thanked the Chair for holding the session on consultation. It was useful to hear a diversity of experiences and highlight good practice.

120. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 MARCH 2024 TO 31 MAY 2024

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 March 2024 to 31 May 2024. It was noted that the Cabinet Meeting scheduled for April and May 2024 had been cancelled.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

121. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

122. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items, however as it was the Chair's final meeting, Councillor Pitchley put on record her thanks to Councillor Clark. She noted that she had led the committee through some challenging work and had been an exceptional chair.

Councillor Yasseen echoed this and thanked Councillor Clark for her hard work. She had really represented Rotherham's communities and had been at the heart of delivering to local people. The Chair had enhanced and embodied scrutiny values. Councillor Yasseen went on to thank officers and the Democratic Services team for their support.

Councillor Clark thanked each of the OSMB Members over her three-year tenure as Chair. She thanked Cabinet Members and officers for their attendance. She also thanked the Assistant Chief Executive, Head of Democratic Services, Governance Manager and Senior Governance Advisor for all their support. She felt that she was leaving scrutiny in a good place for the 2024 intake of elected members.

She wished everyone who was observing, a Ramadan Mubarak.

123. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 10am on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at Rotherham Town Hall.