

**COUNCIL MEETING
17th July, 2024**

Present:- Councillor Sheila Cowen (in the Chair); Councillors Haleem, Adair, Ahmed, Allen, Bacon, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Baum-Dixon, Bennett-Sylvester, Beresford, Blackham, Bower, Brent, A. Carter, C. Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clarke, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Currie, Cusworth, Duncan, Elliott, Fisher, Foster, Garnett, Hall, N Harper, Hughes, Hussain, Jackson, Jones, Keenan, Knight, Marshall, Mault, McKiernan, Monk, Rashid, Read, Reynolds, Ryalls, Sheppard, Stables, Steele, Sutton, Tarmey, Taylor, Thorp, Tinsley and Williams.

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

29. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed Members of the passing of former Rother Vale ward councillor John Swift and passed on the Council's deepest condolences to his family. The Mayor also offered her congratulations to the following people who were recognised in the King's Birthday Honours List:

- OBE – Rotherham Council's Chief Executive, Sharon Kemp for services to business and to the community in Rotherham and South Yorkshire. The honour recognised 30 years of public service.
- OBE – Sarah McLeod, Chief Executive of Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust, for services to heritage.
- MBE - Craig Simon Batham, Special Chief Officer, South Yorkshire Police (Dinnington) for services to policing.
- MBE - Suzanne Jackson, Domestic Abuse Risk Assessor Manager and Force Lead for Honour Based Abuse, South Yorkshire Police (Rotherham), for services to the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls.
- MBE - Elizabeth Anne Kenny. English Hub Lead, Whiston Worrygoose Junior and Infant Primary School for services to Education.
- BEM - Claire Frances Ashby, for services to the community in Rotherham.
- BEM - Helen Mortimer, Volunteer, Rotherham Samaritans. For services to People in Emotional Distress.

All were given a round of applause.

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The Mayor had been honoured to have been involved in Rotherham's annual Armed Forces Day on 22 June and stated that it was a pleasure to see so many Members in the Chamber for the meeting that were also able to attend to give thanks to the veterans and active service men and women.

The full list of engagements was appended to the Mayor's Letter.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Alam, Beck, Lelliott, Pitchley and Yasseen.

31. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETINGS

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings of Council held on 17 May and 22 May 2024 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Sheppard

32. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which confirmed the receipt of one petition that had been received since the last Council meeting. The petition was titled "Removal of Mayor's Picture" and received 27 valid signatures. In accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the lead petitioner, Councillor Ball, was entitled to address the Council for a period of five minutes.

Resolved:

1. That the petition be received, and the content noted.
2. That the lead petitioner receive a written response from the Assistant Chief Executive, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, by 31 July 2024.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

34. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The following public questions had been received:

1. From Mr Smith:

Is RMBC planning and enforcement now so unfit for purpose it needs to be put back into special measures?

Mr Smith was unable to attend the meeting and a written response would be provided.

2. From T:

RMBC have admitted to spending more than £60,000 on legal costs in Information Rights Tribunals.

Will the Leader tell the truth about when he was first informed about the Investigation into Swinton Lock Activity Centre?

T was unable to attend the meeting and a written response would be provided.

3. From Mrs Bader:

At the OSMB meeting on June 5th, the Chair of OSMB promised to discuss the recommendations from the community petition titled "Rotherham's Commitment to a Permanent Ceasefire and to Promote Peace in Palestine" on July 24th. We seek assurance that this discussion will indeed take place, as it has already been delayed from the originally promised date?

Councillor Steele confirmed that discussion of the petition was on the published agenda for the OSMB meeting on Wednesday 24 July. The lead petitioner had been notified. Councillor Steele advised that any questions that members of the public wanted to ask on the petition should be submitted to governance before the meeting.

In her supplementary question, Mrs Bader stated that she and others had been engaging with the local council since October 2023 with minimal results despite maximum effort. She said that the Council operated inefficiently and made it practically impossible to engage with the processes. Mrs Bader asked if steps would be taken to remedy this issue?

Councillor Steele explained that if discussions regarding the processes and standing orders were required, that would be for the Leader to act upon as part of a working group. He also explained that the petition had been pulled from the agenda of the last OSMB meeting due to the calling of the General Election and the start for purdah. There was no other reason. Councillor Steele reassured Mrs Bader that the petition would be discussed at the meeting on 24 July 2024.

4. Ms Yusufi:

During the community OSMB meetings discussing the Palestine Petition requests, we were informed that the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council declined to raise the Palestinian flag, citing election purdah. Rotherham residents have been requesting the Council to raise the flag since October of last year. What was your reason since October, before the elections, not to?

The Leader stated that he did not know who had informed Ms Yusufi that a decision had been taken not to fly the flag due to purdah as that was incorrect. The request had been made as part of the petition and the petition was working its way through the Council's democratic processes. A decision would be taken by Members of OSMB on 24 July about whether they want to recommend that the flag is flown. The recommendations will then be sent to Cabinet Members for consideration. Until then, no decisions have been or will be made regarding flying the Palestinian flag.

Ms Yusufi stated that she had been informed by the Council's legal officer that the request had been declined by the Leader and the Chief Executive. In her supplementary question, Ms Yusufi stated that during initial discussions with the Council about the Palestine petition, she and others were repeatedly informed that divestment discussions were legally off-limits. However, legal advice had been received indicated that the law does allow for certain divestment actions. She ask if the Leader and Councillors understood the distinction between a clear legal reality and legal advice that is based on an opinion? The experience of those involved in the petition so far suggested that those perspectives were often conflated, with advice being presented as a legal position when it was not. Ms Yusufi stated that there should be reticence on the part of Councillors to investigate that and challenge opinions that might not necessarily be reflective of legal reality.

The Leader explained that the Council's Monitoring Officer represented the legal opinion to the Council and Councillors were legally obliged to act within the legal advice given to them by the Monitoring Officer. The Leader asked Ms Yusufi to provide any evidence she had that would suggest that the advice provided was not correct and he would consider it. However, in his role as Leader, he had to act within the advice given to him by the Monitoring Officer.

5. Mr Ashraf:

Previously, the Council Leader expressed a commitment to combating antisemitism, emphasising concern for the safety of Jewish community members and the need for the IHRA definition. However, local and national organisations, such as Sheffield Jews Against Israeli Apartheid and Jews For Palestine, have expressly condemned the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Does the Leader not consider their concerns valid?

The Leader stated that this had been covered before. He explained that of course there were people from all different communities that took different views on the IHRA. The Leader had nothing to add to the comments previously made which were that the IHRA was the generally accepted mainstream definition of antisemitism. The Leader wanted to gently suggest to the people who wanted to advocate on behalf of the Palestinian cause, which he supported as he wanted to see progress for the Palestinian people and progress towards a Palestinian State, that conflating it in some way with what was or was not acceptable to say about Jewish people did not help move the cause any further forward. The Council would be staying with the IHRA definition, and the Leader hoped that progress would be made in terms of the petition. He did not think it was helpful for the Council to be sidetracked into discussions around definitions.

In his supplementary Mr Ashraf stated that the point being made was that criticism of Israel was not criticism against Jewish people. He also referenced the Leader's comments at the last meeting about protection and safety of residents. Ms Ashraf asked for parity in the treatment of all groups. He also asked what steps the Council had taken to protect Muslim residents of whom there was a significant population in Rotherham and who have been experiencing a rise in Islamophobia?

The Leader explained that there was no equivalent definition of Islamophobia and that was a matter of some contention and discussion nationally around the best way of taking forward those definitional questions. The Leader confirmed that the Community Safety team worked very closely with people in the Muslim community when they are affected by discriminatory behaviour and actions that would endanger them. Steps were taken in the budget agreed in February 2024 to bring in additional resources to support people who might be affected by that, including people from the Muslim community. If there were issues that the Council needed to be made aware of, the Leader asked that he was happy to receive representations. He reiterated that concerns were being taken seriously.

35. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no matters requiring the exclusion of the press or public.

36. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader welcomed everyone back to the Council Chamber and referenced the General Election that had taken place since the last meeting. He stated that the public had spoken and that it was time for change in the country. Change was needed in Rotherham as much as anywhere else. The Leader hoped that all Members would send their good wishes and good luck to the new Prime Minister and his team.

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The Council would continue to make their case to the new government on behalf of the people of Rotherham. That started in the week prior to the Council meeting with the work that Councillor Allen had been leading on, alongside the other 19 biggest social landlords in the country, making the case for more coordinated support for council housing and social housing more widely. This would ensure that more homes were not just built – although the country needed more homes – but ensured that they were affordable and accessible to all, as they should be in a civilised society.

The Leader congratulated Jake Richards on his election as the new MP for Rother Valley and confirmed that the new MP had already been in direct contact with him on behalf of his residents. Members in Dinnington should feel assured that Jake Richards MP had been making the case on behalf of Dinnington Regeneration Scheme.

The Leader also congratulated John Healey MP on his new role as Defence Secretary. In what was a more uncertain time for the world than had been known for some years there was no one the Leader could think of with a better temperament, intellect and work ethic to be representing the nation in the Oval Office last week and on the global stage over the months and years to come.

The Leader highlighted the programme of summer events that was now well underway:

- Rotherham Pride on 8 June which returned for the first time in 5 years.
- National Civic Day which was celebrated at Clifton Park Museum on 15 June.
- Armed Forces Day on 22 June where Rotherham came together to say thank you to the Armed Forces community.
- The Reytons concert in Clifton Park which 20,000 people attended.

The Leader stated that he had often said that for too long Rotherham and the community had hidden its light under a bushel, but the Reytons gig prompted everyone once again that they must not do that. Rotherham was a place that mattered, and a community that mattered. There was a question later on the agenda that the Leader stated seemed dismissive about the Children's Capital of Culture and hoped he was misunderstanding it. This was because Rotherham's children deserve that it stand a bit taller, a bit more assertive on their behalf, so that it gives them the status and the opportunities that they deserve, not running itself down.

On the subject of successes, the Leader acknowledged that the Chief Executive, Sharon Kemp, had been awarded the OBE in the Kings Birthday honours list. He believed he spoke for all present in congratulating her on her well overdue recognition, for a lifetime of public service. The Leader explained that the Council would not have been able to make the changes it had made and the progress it had made on behalf

of the public of Rotherham without the dedication and leadership which the Chief Executive has shown, and the Leader stated that he was deeply grateful for that.

In response to the statement, Councillor A Carter offered his congratulations to the new government and to John Healey MP on his post within the Cabinet. The Liberal Democrat group echoed the Leader's comments that the country had voted for change and Councillor A Carter stated that the Liberal Democrats would hold the new government to account. Councillor A Carter also offered his congratulations to Jake Richards MP on his election and offered his thanks to the former MP for Rother Valley, Alexander Stafford, for the work he had done for his residents. The Liberal Democrat group also offered their congratulations to the Chief Executive on the award of the OBE.

Councillor Z Collingham spoke to offer the Conservative Group's congratulations to the Chief Executive and to wish good luck to all the new MP's whilst acknowledging the outgoing vote of thanks to Alexander Stafford from Councillor A Carter. Councillor Z Collingham's question to the Leader was: does he feel that the new Labour government will need luck, particularly given that it has squeaked into office at the fifth time of asking the public with the lowest share of the vote from the lowest turnout in decades, especially given the news that the Labour leadership in Wales collapsed after only four months? He asked how much time the Leader would give the government and the milk and honey that the Council and the country have been promised?

In response, the Leader stated that the Labour government came into office off the worst self-inflicted economic debacle for decades; a crisis from the former Conservative Prime Minister which could be aligned to something as disastrous as the Suez Crisis. That government had been elected on restoring good standards in the public finances but ended up with a record level of debt to GDP ratio and with trust in politicians and public servants on all sides reaching new lows which was reflected by the low turnout. The Leader stated that the country was in a very very deep hole after 14 years of Conservative government so, yes, the Leader agreed that the new Labour government would need luck to help them make the changes that were needed. It would take time because it was not possible to simply rebuild after 14 years of taking away. The Leader encouraged everyone to rally behind the new Government to help them achieve the goals set out. In relation to the comment regarding milk and honey, the Leader stated that the manifesto had gone to great lengths to make minimal commitments, honest commitments, about what could be delivered. The Leader hoped that the would be delivered and exceeded over time.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester offered his congratulations to the Chief Executive and noted her exceptional work, along with officers at the Council, during the COVID-19 pandemic which led to lives being saved. He also wished to place on record his thanks to the Civic Support team

who had been supporting him and Councillor Ryalls especially following vile online abuse. Thanks was also given to the Leader for his letter lobbying in relation to Voter Identification. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked the following question: in relation to affordable homes and ownership, would the Leader also be stressing the need for funding for the communities those homes reside in? For example, numbers in the 1960's lead to unsustainable communities.

In response, the Leader confirmed he would pass on his thanks to the Civic team and stated that he had been sorry to hear about the abuse Councillor Ryalls had been receiving and the difficulties in the community. It was not acceptable, and Members of any party should not be subject to that. Members were elected to represent their communities and they were making democracy work. Respect was vital otherwise the whole system would fall apart. In relation to funding for communities, not just homes, the Leader agreed with Councillor Bennett-Sylvester. There had been some promising noises from the government in terms of bringing forward infrastructure investments with bigger housing developments. In the past housing had been built and, in some circumstances, community development had followed but this was not always the case. In the community development work could take place up front it would be beneficial for those communities and would ease some of the concerns around house building.

Councillor Bacon asked the Leader to commit to following on the work from Alexander Stafford, specifically the petition regarding Ulley Crossroads and he asked the Leader to commit to ensuring the greenbelt that surrounded Todwick would not be touched and would be protected.

In response to Councillor Bacon, the Leader confirmed that there were no plans to change any road safety measures but if this particular matter had not been picked up it could be brought forward in the usual way. In relation to Todwick greenbelt, the Leader confirmed that a report had been published for the Cabinet meeting to be held on 29 July 2024 regarding the Local Plan and it was not thought that any further land was required for the housing land supply for the period up to 2040. Therefore there were no plans to build on the Todwick greenbelt. This could not be committed to in perpetuity as there may come a point after 2040 where that was no longer the case. The Leader however reiterated that between 2024 and 2040, there were no plans whatsoever to allow development on those sites outside Todwick beyond what was already in the Local Plan.

37. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Councillor Ball asked the following questions on the Cabinet Minutes:

1. In relation to burials and cemeteries, Maltby Cemetery and many others were quickly running out of room. Could they be given the same level of interest as those mentioned in the Cabinet minutes?

The Leader confirmed that Maltby Cemetery would certainly be part of the same exercised referenced in the Cabinet Minutes. The work was being undertaken and there was no distinction between the various sites so ensure there was sufficient supply. The Leader stated that Councillor Ball would be kept informed of the progress.

2. Was the Council hitting its own targets on nature recovery as it seemed as though it was struggling to hit the targets for planting trees, especially if the Council would be requiring green belt space to build on at some stage?

The Leader explained that he was not aware of any problems in that regard but would provide a response in writing if there was something that he had missed.

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 10 June 2024 be received.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Sheppard

38. NOTICE OF MOTION - GRASS CUTTING AND GREEN SPACES

It was moved by Councillor Baum-Dixon and seconded by Councillor Z Collingham:

Summary/Background:

The cutting of grass and maintenance of verges and public open spaces is a fundamental service provided by the Council.

Neglected and overgrown verges are a risk to public safety, obstructing motorists, limiting access for the disabled and reducing the scope for active travel.

Aside from designated parks, our community green spaces and common lands are vital public amenities. They provide areas for communities to walk dogs, to gather for picnics and games and to participate in informal sport and exercise, helping reduce social exclusion and tackle loneliness. Those attached to Local Authority and sheltered housing enhance the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents, while well-kept cemeteries and memorials are vital in treating lost loved ones with dignity.

Effective maintenance of these areas is a public good, inspiring residents to take pride in their communities and improving the desirability of Rotherham, encouraging tourists to visit and businesses to invest. By contrast, poor maintenance risks public safety, takes away public

amenities and encourages fly-tipping. It is hugely corrosive to the reputation of the Council and the good name of Rotherham Borough.

The Council is concerned that:

In 2024, there have been widespread and systemic issues in the delivery of this service, leading to complaints, concerns and frustrations that need to be taken seriously.

Certain areas have been deliberately disregarded from the outset and given over to rewilding projects. Whilst the benefits of rewilding are appreciated, the lack of local consultation or communication undermines public support and gives an appearance of an excuse for neglect.

Areas that remain to be cut are too often not being. Village focal points are left to deteriorate and public spaces become unusable. When maintenance is eventually carried out, there are instances where it is incomplete or inadequate, with grass uncut around important signage and cuttings left behind, killing the grass beneath.

These are failures of the most basic kind that should not be accepted as satisfactory.

There has been no proactive communication with elected members or Neighbourhoods about the issues in the service, or any actions being taken to address them. This is poor partnership working and undermines residents' confidence in the Council's ability to plan and deliver the services they pay for.

We want to live in a Borough we are proud to call home and recognise the importance of maintaining our public spaces.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Acknowledge that the current situation is unacceptable.
2. Request that all Cabinet Members cascade the importance of proactive communication of service wide issues to Neighbourhoods and elected members.
3. Request that the Council's Cabinet consider additional capital funding if required to resolve issues identified in the service.
4. Request that the Improving Places Select Commission urgently considers:
 - a) A comprehensive public consultation on the maintenance of public areas across the borough.
 - b) A protocol for public consultation before rewilding areas.

- c) A review of the effectiveness of zonal working and maintenance.
- d) Equipment needs within the service.
- e) Training needs within the service.
- f) Premises, in particular issues with storing equipment undermining service delivery.
- g) Sickness days lost per FTE within the service and opportunities to reduce this over time.
- h) Engagement with landowners, parish and town councils, and statutory bodies to improve the coordination and cost-effectiveness of green space maintenance.
- i) A review of any unclaimed land or land with unknown ownership to identify the owners and ensure effective maintenance.
- j) Opportunities to engage community assistance in specific projects or empowering volunteers to participate in the maintenance of their local green spaces.

On being put to the vote, the motion fell.

39. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved: That Council note receipt of the minutes of the Audit Committee.

Mover: Councillor Marshall

Seconder: Councillor Baggaley

40. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Councillor Ball asked the following questions on the Health and Wellbeing Board minutes:

1. The population of Rotherham was over 270,000 and in the last week, there were 7,480 people on the waiting list to be housed and in the wards the population was increasing steadily. Did the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health think that the targets for houses might not be hit if imposed and if so, was the Cabinet Member concerned about building on the green belt land to achieve these targets?

Councillor Baker-Rogers confirmed a written response would be provided.

2. With the Council not hitting its own targets on reducing its emissions as of last year, despite revising its targets to make them more favourable, did the Cabinet Member agree that the Council was contributing to the poor mortality rates? Councillor Ball referenced a section of the minutes that stated: *“Given that much of the impact that air pollution had on mortality was linked with cardiovascular deaths, it was considered that it made a contribution to some of, perhaps even all, cardiovascular deaths.”* He stated that the Council was therefore failing to protect its residents and contributing to a lower mortality rate.

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He asked when the Council would get a grip of the emissions it produces in order to help residents.

Councillor Baker-Rogers confirmed a written response would be provided.

Resolved: That Council note receipt of the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers Second: Councillor Cusworth

41. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved: That Council note receipt of the Minutes of the Licensing Board Sub-Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee.

Mover: Councillor Hughes Second: Councillor Beresford

42. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved: That Council note receipt of the Minutes of the Planning Board.

Mover: Councillor Williams Second: Councillor Mault

43. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved: That Council note receipt of the Minutes of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

Mover: Councillor Monk Second: Councillor Clarke

44. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Resolved: That Council note receipt of the Minutes of Staffing Committee.

Mover: Councillor Read Second: Councillor Sheppard

45. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

6 questions had been submitted:

1. Councillor A Carter for the designated spokesperson on South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority: Will SYMCA consider increasing the text size on bus stop timetables so that it can be more easily be read by residents with visual impairments, rather than leaving blank space on the timetable sheets?

The Leader explained that it was not always possible to increase the size of text on bus stop timetables. However, if passengers had issues with a particular stop, large format PDF document specific to their needs could be provided, and as these were produced individually, the Traveline Team could ensure that it applied to their nearest stop or the stops they used most frequently. If any residents would like this service, they should get in touch with the Traveline Team. SYMCA were also looking at new technologies which would assist passengers and were in the process of trialling electronic timetables at stops which also had an audio functionality which read out the timetable to visually impaired passengers, one of which had already been installed at the stop at Ecclesall Road/Carrington Road in Sheffield. SYMCA would welcome any feedback available on its use.

Councillor A Carter stated that that was good news. The question had arisen because as the number of bus routes shortened, the timetables shortened and were now mainly blank space. It was a simple solution to increase the size of the information available to fill the blank space. Would the Leader feed this back?

The Leader stated that he was happy to provide the feedback.

2. Councillor Ball for the designated spokesperson on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority: Can the member please provide data from the last 5 years on what the budget forecast was compared to the actual financial expenditure?

Councillor Knight explained that in 19/20 SYFR had to use £3.139M of their reserves, in 20/21 £1.058M and 21/22 £0.826M used. In 22/23 and 23/24 SYFR had contributed to their reserves.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball stated that SYFR's forecast was wildly out, and the Advertiser had picked up that £1.5m was being put back into reserves. With Rotherham residents being told there was no money to provide a night-time cover and two appliances in Rotherham whilst year on year, SYFR bank more millions, why was Rotherham left with a diminished cover, despite having the money to facilitate a night shift?

Councillor Knight confirmed that a written response would be provided.

3. Councillor Ball for the designated spokesperson on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority: Can you inform me how much SYFR has in reserves?

Councillor Knight confirmed that the position in relation to reserves was more complicated than simply a headline number. As Councillor Ball was aware, reserves were earmarked for specific purposes and could not be called on for day-to-day use. The Authority anticipated useable earmarked reserves reducing to just £5.7m during the planning period 2024-27.

South Yorkshire's reserve levels were just below average, when benchmarked (in March 2022) against reserves held by other standalone fire and rescue authorities as a percentage of annual core funding.

Councillor Knight agreed to provide the more detailed breakdown of the reserves information in writing.

4. Councillor Ball for the designated spokesperson on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority: How much interest has been earned over the last 4 years from the reserve funds?

Councillor Knight explained that in total, the interest earned on cash held over the last four years was £805,000. However, that varied between more than half a million pounds in one year down to just seven thousand pounds in another as interest rates had varied.

5. Councillor Ball for the designated spokesperson on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority: If Rotherham was to reinstate a permanent night shift how much would this cost?

Councillor Knight explained that the Authority estimated that the direct staffing costs alone of restoring the second appliance would be an additional £445,288 per year. Clearly this would be a larger figure in reality once other indirect costs such as training were added. Providing a 24/7 second appliance at Rotherham would require an increase in overall establishment. Councillor Knight agreed to provide Councillor Ball with a breakdown of the current resource at Rotherham fire station followed by the increase on resource required and associated year on year cost projections (additional staff salary expenditure only).

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball stated that Rotherham was getting short-changed whilst the reserves increase. He asked that, if the CRMP data showed that Rotherham needed that cover, would Councillor Knight support it and could he explain to Members what the CRMP was as that it was the information was from?

Councillor Knight explained that he had been the representative on the SYFR authority for one meeting and did not have the information requested. He would provide a written response.

6. Councillor Ball for the designated spokesperson on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority: If Rotherham was to reinstate a permanent night shift how much would this cost?

Councillor Knight explained that the availability varied between 4.57% in December 2023 to 69% in February 2024. He confirmed that he would supply the monthly breakdown in writing.

In his supplementary, Councillor Ball stated that he was aware that the second pump at Rotherham had been removed which left Rotherham residents with a greater response time. Whilst one fire appliance could attend in a reasonable response time, Councillor Ball understood that a house fire would require all three appliances. On-call appliances from the Dearne Valley could be used to provide a response into Rotherham. Councillor Ball expressed fear at the reduction in fire cover at Rotherham Central Station but also at the inadequate response now being provided in the Dearne Valley which should be supporting Rotherham residents. He asked Councillor Knight to explain why Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster were fully crewed and yet Rotherham was left with seemingly slower response times to its most critical of callouts?

Councillor Knight reiterated his previous point that he had only attended one meeting so far and therefore did not have the information requested. However, he did share Councillor Ball's concerns that Rotherham was underfunded and under resourced. Councillor Knight stated that he would be happy to discuss the matters raised.

46. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

1. Councillor Thorp: Can you inform me how much money RMBC has received in the form of CIL over the past 3 years after you have allocated the % of funds due to either the Parish or Ward?

Councillor Taylor explained that, in the last 3 financial years (April 2021 to the end of March 2024) the Council have collected just over £6.25 million (£6,252,679) and that would be allocated as per the plan that would be presented to Cabinet on 29 July 2024.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp asked for specific details on where the money was being spent.

Councillor Taylor agreed to provide a written response.

2. Councillor Thorp: There are several sources of funding that is at the disposal of the South Yorkshire Mayoral combined authority, so which fund did you get the money from to build the cycles lanes?

Councillor Taylor explained that the financing for the recently completed projects on Broom Road and Westgate had come from a combination of external funding sources, with most of the funding from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund and the then government's Transforming Cities Fund.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Thorp explained that, under regional sustainable transport, it stated that the Council should put 15% of the funds in. He asked if the Council had done this?

Councillor Taylor informed Councillor Thorp that he did not have that detail and suggested that if Members wanted that level of detail, they ask for it in their initial question. This would enable the Cabinet Member to respond in the meeting rather than by a delay written response.

3. Councillor A Carter: At the last meeting you told us that the parking scheme outside the shops on Brinsworth Lane was due to be completed in June. This has not happened. Can you please explain why this has been further delayed?

Councillor Sheppard offered his apologies regarding the delay on this scheme. It had been an incredibly complex one and there were a number of factors. However the delay mainly related to a legal requirement for a Deed of Dedication, which was now resolved. Resolving this legal issue had been essential to enable the Council to create formal parking spaces on private land in front of the shopping parade, which would help discourage vehicles from parking on pedestrian footways.

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that the Council remained committed to completing this project as soon as possible and appreciated his patience and understanding. The scheme was about to go out to tender and a programme would be provided once the tender process and the legal issues were complete. Councillor Sheppard committed to keeping the ward members informed of the process.

In his supplementary, Councillor A Carter stated that the response sounded very optimistic, and he hoped that the optimism was not misplaced like it was at the last meeting. It was Councillor A Carter's understanding that the Deed of Dedication and going out to tender had already been completed but that had not happened which was very frustrating as promises had been made by the Council. It was something residents wanted and desperately needed. Councillor A Carter asked if the Cabinet Member would commit to making sure there were shovels in the ground on this scheme by the next Council meeting on 11 September 2024?

Councillor Sheppard could not guarantee that the work would start before the next meeting, but he could guarantee that he would keep Councillor A Carter updated. He hoped that even if work had not started by that point, he would be able to confirm the date of when the work would start following the tender process.

4. Councillor Thorp: Who designed the cycle lane from Sheffield Road along Westgate to Corporation St, and how does this comply to the required design features protecting cyclist from motorised traffic?

Councillor Taylor explained that the design was developed by the Council's contractors, Pell Frischman, in collaboration with the Council and in accordance with Government design guidance. This design also incorporated evidence from user perception studies and lessons learnt from other schemes across the country. Proposals were discussed and approved by the Government's executive agency, Active Travel England, as well as the Council's own assurance processes, before commitment and construction of the scheme.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp stated that this response contradicted the response that was sent by the Leader when he had been asked about why kerb stones were not being used. Councillor Thorp stated that he had centred that point on Blackfriars Bridge which had been done with just a white line. The Leader had requested that officers look into the matter and they found out that the Blackfriars Bridge had to be altered and a kerb put in because it did not conform to the scheme.

Councillor Taylor informed Councillor Thorp that he had not seen the letter in question so he would speak with the Leader outside of the meeting and provide a written response.

5. Councillor Thorp: The road signs on Westgate, how do they conform to the highway code?

Councillor Taylor stated that road signs were not regulated by the Highway Code but by national legislation and design standards. The Highway Code was in response to the legislation and the design standards. Therefore, as all the road signs and markings on Westgate were in accordance with legislation and design standards, they conformed to the Highway Code.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp questioned whether the road signs did conform to all the legal requirements. Councillor Thorp gave a number of examples of the road signs on Westgate and explained why he believed they were not conforming to the Highway Code. Councillor Thorp stated that he had seen an accident occur. He also referenced rule 140 in the Highway Code that explained when a single white line should be used for cycle lanes and when it needed to be a dashed line rather than a solid line.

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Councillor Taylor explained that there was a specific question relating to the safety of the Westgate Cycle lane later on the agenda so he would respond to that then. In relation to the signage, Councillor Taylor agreed to go and have a look at the Westgate Cycle lane with officers and he would provide feedback to Councillor Thorp.

6. Councillor Tarmey: What is being done to increase the supply of adapted council homes that are suitable for families with disabled children?

Councillor Allen stated that through its Housing Delivery Programme, the Council routinely considered opportunities to deliver highly specialised homes which were suitable for families with more acute needs. This had seen four specially designed dwellings delivered since 2022, whilst a further five were due to be commissioned imminently.

Accessible and adaptable homes, designed to meet the needs of households with differing needs, including some older or disabled people, and which could be more easily adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants over time, were also being progressed, with 16 such homes due to be commissioned. The Council also strived for all new homes delivered through the Programme to be spacious and modern, to help cater to changing household needs.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tarmey gave an example of some of the difficulties residents in his ward were facing. There was one resident who had to drag her daughter, in a wheelchair, up the stairs outside of their rented home and then carry her to the bathroom. Councillor Tarmey welcomed the properties that were being built. He asked if details on the number of families across the borough experiencing similar difficulties to the ones he outlined, who were on the housing waiting list, could be provided?

Councillor Allen agreed to take the response back to officers. She also informed Councillor Tarmey that there was a programme of aids and adaptations supported by the Council for families who required bespoke property changes to meet their needs. This allowed people to remain in their homes, in the area that they were familiar with, and which had their support mechanisms. Councillor Allen confirmed that she was happy to discuss the residents mentioned with Councillor Tarmey to see if the Aids and Adaptations programme was suitable.

Accessible and adaptable homes, designed to meet the needs of households with differing needs, including some older or disabled people, and which can be more easily adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants over time, are also being progressed, with 16 such homes due to be commissioned. The Council also strives for all new homes delivered through the Programme to be spacious and modern, to help cater to changing household needs.

7. Councillor Tarmey: Physical barriers are often installed on footpaths and entrances to green spaces to prevent access by motorcycles etc. Will the council commit to ensuring all physical barriers/gates are accessible for both wheelchair and mobility scooter users?

Councillor Sheppard explained that there were no barriers or gates available that would prevent access to off road motorcycles while allowing all mobility scooters, wheelchairs or large pushchairs admission along a right of way or access into an urban park. Barriers were installed at the request of the Police or local communities or ward members to prevent or reduce the incidence of antisocial behaviour and criminal activity. However, this can, and did often affect the ability of legitimate users accessing the path or green space. If any community groups did want to contact the Council to discuss specific issues, they could do so by searching for public rights of way on the Councils websites. The Council did try to make as much of the rights of way network available to all users.

8. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What changes have there been between 2019 and now regards traffic numbers using the junctions of Ridgeway with Herringthorpe Valley Road and Laudsdale Road with Herringthorpe Valley Road?

Councillor Taylor explained that, unfortunately, there was not a traffic counter at the specific location mentioned. However, the closest counter was on Herringthorpe Valley Road near Stag Roundabout, with the latest annual daily count being compiled for 2023.

According to the dataset, this location saw a daily vehicle count of 12,492 in 2019, which increased to 14,224 in 2023 – a 13.8% rise.

In his supplementary Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained that this junction was concerning for local residents as there had been a number of accidents. There was also concern regarding the amount of housebuilding taking place in East Herringthorpe and beyond. There had been a number of accidents along Herringthorpe Valley Road which were causing disruption at key time. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if officers could report on traffic disruption on this area in terms of what congestion might be causing and particularly regarding the safety of the two mentioned junctions? He asked if this could include casualty and non-casualty figures.

Councillor Taylor agreed to take the request to officers.

9. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What changes have there been in traffic numbers between 2019 and now heading towards Rotherham on the A630 between the Mushroom Roundabout and the junction with Magna Lane?

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Councillor Taylor explained that, unfortunately, there was not a traffic counter at the specific location mentioned. However, the closest counter was on A630 Doncaster Road, just north of Oldgate Lane, with the latest annual daily count being compiled for 2023.

According to the dataset, this location saw a daily vehicle count of 11,248 in 2019, which increased to 12,782 in 2023 – a 13.7% rise.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that this was an area with extreme congestion. There were two other routes feeding into the route mentioned. It was felt that a lot of that congestion was being driven by housebuilding in places such as Ravenfield, Wickersley and more localised brownfield sites in Thrybergh. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked when some kind of work or plan could be expected to look at handling congestion in the area generally?

Councillor Taylor agreed to raise the matter with highways officers however he did note that rising traffic numbers were a problem nationally and a national solution would need to be found.

10. Councillor Tarmey: Grass cutting and shrub/tree maintenance across Anston and Woodsetts has not been carried out properly in recent months. Does the council have a plan to ensure that appropriate resources are put back into maintaining green spaces in the south of the borough?

As Councillor Alam was not present at the meeting to answer the question, a written response would be provided to Councillor Tarmey.

11. Councillor Ball: Despite repeatedly pointing out health and safety concerns to senior SLT officers regarding using our own personal phones, members still do not have the option to have a separate phone, barring a certain few, will the member responsible ensure safety is for all members regardless of political persuasion and look into the provision of this?

As Councillor Ball was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

12. Councillor Ball: Fridays at Riverside seems to be like entering the Mary Celeste, will the council commit to not having a 4 day week thus safeguarding making Thursday's becoming the new Friday?

As Councillor Ball was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

13. Councillor T Collingham: Can the council provide an update on the traffic restrictions for New Orchard Lane in Thurcroft?

Councillor Taylor explained that the Traffic Regulation Order for the parking restrictions had been sealed and the lines have been partially implemented. There had been complications with this specific TRO as explained to the Councillor at the last meeting.

The signage to allow enforcement of the single yellow line section had been erected, however, due to the presence of a parked vehicle, a very short length of road marking had not been delivered. The Lining Contractor had visited site on a number of occasions and despite visiting neighbouring properties the Council had not been able to identify the owner of the vehicle. The Council would continue to visit the site until the missing road marking were completed.

In his supplementary, Councillor T Collingham stated that this had taken three years and he asked Councillor Taylor he if personally thought that was acceptable? It should only take 12 weeks, but the Council had had three Mayors in the time taken to get the TRO finished.

Councillor Taylor agreed that three years did seem an excessive amount of time and if the situation had been in his own ward, Councillor Taylor would have been asking the same questions. He did note that he did not know the particular intricacies of this case other than the detail provided at the last Council meeting.

14. Councillor T Collingham: The council is implementing Traffic Regulation Orders throughout the borough, with an aim of displacing or preventing parking in problem locations. What reassurance can you give that the lines implemented will be actively enforced and not just treated as a deterrent?

Councillor Taylor stated that the Council was committed to ensuring that the Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) being implemented throughout the borough were actively enforced and not merely treated as deterrents. The goal was to address and mitigate parking issues in problematic locations effectively, and the first step of the process was ensuring that the correct restrictions were in the right places.

15. Councillor Ball: How much is forecast to be earned this year from investing our money in places like Goldman Sachs and overseas banks like Handelsbanken and BNP Paribas?

As neither Councillor Alam or Councillor Ball were present at the meeting to ask or answer the question, a written response would be provided.

16. Councillor Jones: In 2025 Rotherham will hold the honour of the "Childrens capital of culture" can you please confirm which other towns and cities we beat to win this award and the name of the body that awarded us the title?

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Councillor Sheppard explained that Children's Capital of Culture was a title bestowed upon Rotherham by its young people. It was devised by them as a way to change how young people feel about their hometown and create positive opportunities for children and young people across the Borough.

There are many similar programmes which had been devised by a locality. These include Kirklees Year of Music 2023 and Our Year – Wakefield District 2024. Additionally, the Mayor of London awards a bi-annual London Borough of Culture event and Greater Manchester awards an annual Town of Culture. There was also an annual Medieval Market in Chesterfield.

The Children's Capital of Culture commitment had already pulled in millions of pounds to offer events and opportunities to young people that they would otherwise not be able to access, Councillor Sheppard was proud that the Council were delivering on the challenge that had been set and was looking forward to a great year ahead in 2025. Councillor Sheppard hoped Councillor Jones would join in congratulating the young people who had put on so many great events and gained so many skills already.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Jones stated the Council had not actually been "awarded" anything but had instead just come up with the name for the event. Councillor Jones' main concern was that he wanted to make sure the Council were not in the same position as Birmingham Council had been with the Olympics where they were contractually obliged to carry on funding it despite going bankrupt. He asked what the projected increase in footfall was for the year and what the financial value would be to the local economy?

Councillor Sheppard explained that Birmingham had hosted the Commonwealth Games, not the Olympics. In terms of the Children's Capital of Culture, it was not possible to provide exact figures in terms of the financial impact, but it had already delivered incredibly high level training opportunities for many young people. Lots of them had gone on into the cultural sector either as freelancers or to work with companies and it had provided opportunities that they would not have had otherwise.

There were also a number of events such as the Uplift Festival which would take place in July 2024 in the Town Centre. The initiative was about experiences and positivity for young people and the wider population.

17. Councillor Jones: Throughout the last 7 years the council has gone to great lengths to point out that the government is the only organisation that could stop the re-opening of Droppingwell tip. Now we have a Labour government can you please give a timeline as to when we can expect the license to be revoked?

The Leader stated that he could not provide a timeline as the Labour government had been in office for less than two weeks. He doubted the issue of Droppingwell Tip had reached the top of the government's to do list. However, the Leader confirmed that he would continue to make representations to the new government, just as he did with the previous government, representing the view that the Council had taken in opposing the reopening of tip at Droppingwell.

Councillor Jones took it from the response that the Leader had not yet written to the new Secretary of State yet and asked why this was the case. He stated that the new Labour government's ethos was to hit the ground running which obviously had not reached Rotherham Labour as yet. The Defence Secretary had met with the Ukrainian leader and the Prime Minister had attended the NATO summit and the Chancellor had met with every housebuilding organisation in the country. Yet the Council had not gotten round to sending an email to the new Secretary of State. He asked to the Leader to explain why there was no rush?

The Leader stated that he was amused that Councillor Jones thought that this was the top issue facing the country at this time. The Leader believed that families would be more worried about poverty, about not having a home, about homelessness, about NHS waiting lists and access to public services. They would not be worried about the Leader's letter about Droppingwell Tip.

The Leader did confirm that he continued to make representations and had made complaints to the Environment Agency within the last few weeks, and he would continue to do so. In due course, when it was appropriate to do so, those issues would be raised with ministers as well.

18. Councillor T Collingham: The original consultation plans for Towns and Villages included a joint delivery with Highways, to resurface roads and paint fresh line markings at the same time as delivering the project. Surely this collaboration with Highways has failed?

Councillor Sheppard stated that he did not accept that at all. The delivery of the Towns and Villages project, including the collaboration with Highways, had been successful with 15 projects delivered so far through the Towns and Villages fund, 11 of which were carried out by the Highways Delivery Team.

287 metres of roads and 563 metres of footway were repaired in collaboration with this project and all road markings were refreshed during the delivery of the new community projects as required. It had not failed at all.

In his supplementary, Councillor T Collingham stated that, in addressing snagging issues for the Towns and Villages project, it had been repeatedly reported that disabled residents were struggling to

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exit their vehicles due to the location of planters on the High Street. He asked why the Council continued to ignore these concerns and not take action?

Councillor Sheppard stated that he had not been made aware of any issues regarding access where the new planters had been situated. The Highways Delivery Team had been involved in the project within Councillor T Collingham's ward and Councillor Sheppard highlighted a press release that included the following quote from Councillor T Collingham on the completion of the Towns and Villages Scheme on Green Arbour Road: Before this area on Green Arbour Road looked a little tired and was seen to be a hazard by pedestrians and road users alike, but now it couldn't be more different. Parents walking their children to local primary schools can feel more confident about using this pathway and those popping into the shops can access the services they need whether they are walking or driving. Overall, I am delighted with the progress of this project and cannot wait to see how the planters bloom in the spring.

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that this was a good news story and asked that any issues with the siting of the planters be reported to him.

19. Councillor T Collingham: The council continues to inform residents that the planters implemented as part of the Towns and Villages project are the responsibility of parish councils to maintain. Are any of the planters implemented by the Town and Villages project maintained by Parish Councils in the borough, and if so, can a list by location be provided?

Councillor Sheppard explained that arrangements had been made for an After Care Package for each of the Towns and Villages schemes. The maintenance regimes differed across the 22 individual locations in the programme, depending on the pre-scheme arrangements, and the ownership makeup of the land. This involved regular maintenance of all schemes by the Borough Council for a period of between 3 and 5 years. For those schemes on highway land, the maintenance was by default the responsibility of the Borough Council on a permanent basis.

Councillor Sheppard had asked officers to review all the various arrangements that were in place and by the end of the month, share a list confirming the maintenance arrangements.

He confirmed however that the scheme in Thurcroft was within the highway boundary, so the Borough Council was currently responsible for its maintenance.

20. Councillor Jones: With the implementation of the new road layout on Westgate with one single road lane, it's only a matter of time before a serious accident will happen, can you confirm if a head on collision does take place, who would be liable?

Councillor Taylor explained that the scheme had been designed with

reference to relevant guidance and underlying research; and there was very good forward visibility throughout for the design speed and speed limit. The layout implemented had been an option allowed for by Department for Transport guidelines since at least 2008, with such layouts having existed on the ground for at least two decades – it was not an experimental or innovative layout.

Councillor Taylor stated that if people could not drive safely down a road then it would be a matter for those involved and relevant agencies to determine liability between them – the Council would not be liable as it had complied with the design regulations and codes.

In his supplementary Councillor Jones asked who exactly had asked for the cycle lanes? He stated that he had spoken with road cyclists, businesses, residents and other Councillors and non to date had been asked. Those cycling lanes did not appear in the Highway Code or on the driving test, so the scheme was littered with potential accidents waiting to happen. Councillor Jones asked when the Council was going to start listening to residents and re-evaluate the ridiculous pieces of ideology before someone got hurt? He stated that his last quote had come from a road cyclist who had refused to use the cycle lane.

In response, Councillor Taylor stated that these schemes did not just happen. There had been research and analysis before the final design had been agreed. He acknowledged the anecdotal evidence that Councillor Jones had presented and presented his own. Councillor Taylor had used one of the cycling schemes on Paternoster Row in Sheffield as a cyclist and he felt much safer when compared with other designs. He had also used it as a motorist and did not feel that he was endangering anyone.

He concluded that the design had been approved and was in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance. Of course it could never be guaranteed that there would be no accidents on any stretch of road. However the situation would be monitored as usual and assessed over time.

21. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: When considering residential planning applications are members of the planning board able to reject them if they feel they would impact on town centre residential development?

Councillor Williams stated that all planning applications, whether they were determined by officers or Planning Board, were considered on their own merits after having regard to both local planning policy within the Council's adopted Local Plan and national planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Council's local plan had allocated land suitable for housing to meet the targets set out in the Council's Core Strategy. Councillor

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Williams stated that it would be odd to raise concerns about a housing application on a site that had been allocated for that purpose by having concerns about a separate site in the Town Centre. It could well be considered unreasonable to resist an application for housing on an allocated site for concerns about the impact on town centre residential development. Decisions that were considered to be made on unreasonable grounds could lead to a costs awarded against the Council in any subsequent appeal.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester referenced the 2001 Thorpe Hesley planning inquiry and stated that one of the pieces of evidence in that was showing that there had been a 20% drop in the residential population of the town centre. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was concerned that some of the sites in the Town Centre were not coming forward or if they were, it was with a subsidy from the public purse. He asked the Chair of Planning what tools would be useful to lead a policy where there was more favourable market conditions for the Town Centre as opposed to the greenfield developments?

Councillor Williams explained that it was not for him as Chair of Planning Board to set Planning Policy. The housing allocations were set out in the Local Plan and there would be updates throughout the Local Plan period. Councillor Williams noted that the Council were leading on Town Centre development and there had been some great schemes.

22. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: A request from Gateway users, can a changing places toilet facility be provided that is convenient for town centre shoppers?

Councillor Sheppard explained that there was a changing places facility at Gulliver's and was aware of the difference that having those facilities made. In terms of the Town Centre, the Council had recently delivered new Changing Places toilet facilities at New York Stadium, Clifton Park and at Grimm & Co's new premises on Ship Hill opposite the Town Hall. The latter was likely to be the most convenient facility for people shopping in the town centre. A new Changing Places toilet facility was also being planned as part of the redevelopment of the Markets and Library.

23. Councillor Reynolds: Are there any costs, fees, or subscriptions to RMBC for the services of the organisation GO4Growth?

The Leader explained that there were costs of £28,500 across the length of the contract, with £9,500 paid to date. All the activities of Go4Growth were externally funded, through UKSPF, rather than from core Council funding.

24. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: We are several months into running on street markets whilst market redevelopment takes place. What

experience is being taken from this for future street market provision?

Councillor Taylor explained that in November 2023 the traders in the Outdoor Covered Market moved operations to expand the on-street market offer to every day of the week. To date, the feedback from those traders had been generally positive, with an increased number of market traders taking advantage of the reduced rents and contributing to more visible activity in the town centre.

However, it was also important to recognise that this was currently working well during the warmer weather, and street markets were typically less attractive for traders and customers in the winter, when a covered indoor facility provided a better trading environment. The Council would continue to review the impact, especially any variances over the winter months.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester praised the outdoor markets, particularly the bazaar held on a Thursday. The experience was positive for the Town Centre and raised the quandary about whether or not markets like the bazaar could be given the option of remaining as street markets when the indoor market redevelopment was complete. He asked Councillor Taylor if that was possible.

Councillor Taylor confirmed that discussions were taking place regarding keeping that “buzz” in the Town Centre and confirmed that he would raise Councillor Bennett-Sylvester’s suggestion in those discussions.

25. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the local economy please give their commentary on the economic benefits to Rotherham town centre from hosting Pride on June 8th?

Councillor Taylor explained that the first Rotherham Pride since 2019 took place in June and relocated from Clifton Park to the Town Centre. The event incorporated a stage at All Saints’ Square and stalls at Minster Gardens. There was no parade this year as the organisers were relatively new to event management and wished to start with a smaller scale event to test the Town Centre location.

Although there was no independent economic impact study commissioned for this event (because of its small scale), it did bring an additional footfall to the town centre, which was measured at 5,436 people.

At another recent town centre event (Roots) where an independent study was commissioned, visitor spend was calculated at an average of £22.85 per person.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester paid

tribute to the Pride Team who only started in August 2023 and to the Rotherham Event's Team for delivering an excellent event. Although it was a relatively small event, it did show that All Saint's Square in the Town Centre could produce a truly exciting backdrop for events. Could the Council look at supporting more events there going forward, particularly if there was a financial requirement?

Councillor Taylor stated that the regeneration team were well aware that events in the Town Centre were an important factor and he thanked Councillor Bennett-Sylvester for his praise of the teams involved.

26. Councillor Z Collingham: What is the rationale in requiring the family of some Council tenants, who lose mental capacity, to obtain a Court order before the tenancy can be surrendered, leaving Council properties to stand empty for several months?

Councillor Allen explained that when a tenant who had been assessed as lacking capacity to make the decision to terminate their tenancy agreement and did not have anyone with legal authority to make this decision on their behalf, there was no other way of ending the tenancy agreement lawfully other than by making an application to the Court of Protection.

An application to the Court of Protection could take several months to be processed by the court before a final order was made granting permission to end a tenancy agreement. The particular circumstance of a case did influence the time taken to resolve those issues.

Councillor Allen sought to assure Councillor Z Collingham that in all cases, the Council was acting in accordance with the law, and they would always look to work with families to resolve such cases as quickly as possible.

Councillor Z Collingham stated that he was aware that the law in this situation could be a nuisance and a cause of delays. He asked whether Councillor Allen would explore whether the tenancy document itself could be reviewed to add something to cover these situations. Given the slim risk of a person in care returning to their home to find it reallocated, could provision be included for a doctor's letter or something similar so that the house could be put back into the stock as soon as possible?

Councillor Allen explained that the time taken with these processes was reducing. However, the Housing Allocation's Policy was being reviewed and the points raised by Councillor Z Collingham could be picked up as part of that. Councillor Allen encouraged Member to join the working group on the Housing Allocation's Policy.

27. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can the Deputy Leader please give their commentary on the benefits of hosting Pride on June 8th in relation to their social inclusion portfolio?

Councillor Sheppard echoed the earlier thanks given to the Pride Committee for doing such an excellent job. The Council was pleased to have had the opportunity to host Pride in the town centre and work with the new committee of volunteers who had come together to run it. Pride was an important platform for the LGBTQ+ community. It was not only a celebration of diversity in relation to sexuality and gender, it's also a platform to address some of the challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community, which still battles social stigma, discrimination and harassment including hate crimes and violence.

In supporting Pride, the Council upheld its commitment to equality, demonstrating its support for its own LGBTQ+ employees and elected members as well as its LGBTQ+ communities. It was about showing community leadership and an important expression of the value, Caring - demonstrating the commitment to inclusivity and the desire to take time to listen and understand what matters to all residents and groups. Councillor Sheppard was thrilled that it was such a success.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester highlighted bigoted letters in the Rotherham Advertiser and the parliamentary candidates from parties that had questionable commitments to Human Rights in relation to equality gaining several thousands of votes locally and stated that there was still lots of work to do. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester raised the expansion of Pride Pals and asked if conversations could take place with the Pride Committee and information sent through the relevant networks? This would allow for safe places for people to express themselves.

Councillor Sheppard stated that he was always happy to be engaging with the Pride volunteers.

28. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can the Deputy Leader please report on what, if any percentage of the neighbourhood working budget is provided by the housing revenue account?

Councillor Sheppard explained that the members Community Leadership Fund (CLF) budget was £93,456 and it received a £20,000 (21%) HRA contribution which was distributed evenly across the 59 individual budgets. The capital budget did not receive any HRA funding.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if there was a contribution in terms of officer time? Further, the five most deprived wards contributed 30 to 37% of Council properties and suffered the highest deprivation, biggest social problems and were further behind than other neighbourhoods. He asked whether it was possible for

those areas that had more social housing to receive a higher proportion of the funding?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that the Housing Revenue Account did make a contribution to the Neighbourhood Teams staffing budget. In terms of the Ward Housing Budgets, there was a base budget for each ward of £4,000 along with an enhancement dependent upon the number of Council homes in the ward to give them more resources. At the Council moved forward with Neighbourhood Working, it wanted to be able to support all communities together and Councillor Sheppard was always happy to receive contributions that could contribute to this.

29. Councillor Bacon: Can the leader of the council update us on his actions as a portfolio holder and board member of SYMCA, and let us know how many times he's attended a scrutiny body specifically for this role since he got it?

The Leader explained that he had been appointed as the portfolio holder of Policy, Engagement and Impact in September 2023. He confirmed that he had not been asked to attend the SYMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the role to date.

As a board member of the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority over the last 12 months, the Leader had been working, together with others, across the region to:

- Progress the assessment of bus franchising to end the deregulation of the bus network South Yorkshire, in accordance with the statutory process to franchise the network. This builds on the successful transfer of the Supertram network into public control in April.
- Bring more investment into priority schemes in the borough, with the MCA's budget agreed in March allocating more than £310m into priority interventions to improve our roads, public transport, reduce the risk of flooding and create more jobs and skills across the breadth of the borough.
- Agree a Level 4 Devolution Deal with Government to bring more powers and control to the region from Westminster, so more decisions are made by South Yorkshire, for South Yorkshire.
- Set out a comprehensive blueprint for the future of the region through the new Growth and Skills plans that were agreed in March, to create more and better growth across the whole of South Yorkshire.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bacon stated that something was missing as he had not seen any portfolio holders at SYMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. The government guidance released in 2023 stated that members who were portfolio holders should commit to engaging regularly with the Committee and attend when requested. Councillor Bacon asked the Leader to commit

to engaging regularly with the scrutiny bodies in his role as a SYMCA portfolio holder and to commit to asking other portfolio holders to do the same?

The Leader explained that he would commit to those requests in principle as he had no issues with the requests. However, it was for the SYMCA scrutiny committee, like it was in Rotherham, to invite portfolio holders to attend. They could not impose themselves on scrutiny bodies.

The portfolio holders at SYMCA did not make individual decisions.

Decisions were made by the SYMCA Board as a collective.

30. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: I've recently been at several council venues that accept Rothercard but seen no POS advertising it. Why aren't we providing point of sale material advertising Rothercard at point of sale?

Councillor Sheppard thanked Councillor Bennett-Sylvester for the feedback. last year.

The annual review of the scheme was due to take place in September. The Council would be looking at applicant numbers, the range/type of discounts available and take-up rates.

They would also be looking at anything else that could be done to improve the scheme. So as part of the review, Councillor Sheppard stated that he would be more than happy to take forward the suggestion for more actively promoting the benefits of the scheme across Council venues.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester highlighted that he and Councillor Sheppard were the only two Members of the working group returned at the election. He therefore encouraged other to join as he had found the work extremely satisfying.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester expressed his frustration at the lack of promotion of Rothercard, such as at the Civic Theatre. People needed to be more aware that if a service was advertised, it would be used more. Did the Cabinet Member agree that the Council were not doing the best job at shouting about how great Rothercard was?

Councillor Sheppard stated that the Council wanted to get the scheme promoted as much as possible. Suggestions would be taken forward as part of the review.

31. Councillor Tinsley: Biffa have taken over the management of the household residual waste facility in Manvers. Is there any foreseen changes to the service in general?

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As neither Councillor Alam or Councillor Tinsley were present at the meeting to ask or answer the question, a written response would be provided.

32. Councillor Tinsley: For the Maltby Towns and Villages Highstreet project. Will we see a shovel in the ground by the end of 2024?

As Councillor Tinsley was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

33. Councillor Yasseen: Does the council acknowledge that Herringthorpe Playing Field, as described by the public, is protected by a restrictive covenant, thus safeguarding and protecting Herringthorpe Playing fields from any development that does not preserve its designation for recreational purposes?

As Councillor Yasseen was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

34. Councillor Tinsley: Broken glass is a daily occurrence In Coronation Park at Maltby. There has been calls for it to be cleaned daily. Will the council implement this?

As Councillor Tinsley was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

35. Councillor Tinsley: When will the enhanced street cleaning on Maltby Highstreet begin?

As Councillor Tinsley was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

36. Councillor Tinsley: Why hasn't the council created a Playing Field Strategy?

As Councillor Tinsley was not present at the meeting to ask the question, a written response would be provided.

47. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.