

**COUNCIL MEETING
6th November, 2024**

Present:- The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Sheila Cowen) (in the Chair); Councillors Ismail, Ahmed, Alam, Allen, Bacon, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Beresford, Blackham, Bower, Brent, A. Carter, C. Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clarke, Z. Collingham, Currie, Cusworth, Duncan, Elliott, Foster, Garnett, Hall, Harper, Havard, Hughes, Jackson, Jones, Marshall, Mault, McKiernan, Monk, Pitchley, Rashid, Read, Reynolds, Ryalls, Sheppard, Steele, Sutton, Tarmey, Taylor, Thorp, Tinsley, Williams and Yasseen.

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

71. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor was deeply saddened to report on the death of Roland Benton, former Mayor and Councillor for Swinton. As a mark of respect, the meeting stood and observed a minute's silence.

The Mayor was pleased to be able to welcome officers representing the winners of the Transport News, Northern Local Authority 'Fleet of the Year' award to the meeting. The award was made for being forward thinking over low carbon alternative fuels, by trialling 10 vehicles on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil which has delivered a carbon saving of 65 tonnes over the 6 month trial period. Had diesel been used in the sample vehicles for the trial, this would have emitted 70.35 tonnes, but the alternative fuel meant only 5.28 tonnes of carbon was emitted.

A full list of engagements was appended to the Mayor's letter.

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Resolved: That apologies for absence be received from Councillors Adair, Ball, T. Collingham, Fisher, Keenan, Knight, Lelliott and Stables.

73. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council Meeting held on 11 September 2024.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 11 September 2024 be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Sheppard

74. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the one petition that had been received since the last Council meeting. The petition was titled: Traffic Lights to be Installed at the Junction of Wentworth Road/Stubbin Road B6089. It had received 77 valid signatures and as such the lead petitioner, Ms Walston, had been invited to address the Council in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme. Ms Walston did not attend and the matter was therefore referred directly to the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment for a response.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the Council received the petition listed at paragraph 2.1 of the report and the lead petitioner or their representative be entitled to address the Council for a total period of five minutes in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme.
3. That the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment be required to respond to the lead petitioner, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday 20 November 2024.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Currie made a declaration of interest in regard to the Minute 88 as a family member was a police officer.

76. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

11 public questions had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12:-

1. Mr Jonathan Smith: Madam Mayor, to reiterate my colleagues email to yourself in September can you confirm that you have formally requested, on our behalf, our cordial invitations to all the Rotherham MPs, Councillors, council officers and local dignitaries to the solemn occasion of Raising the Palestinian Flag at the Town Hall on Friday the 29th of November?

The Leader explained that the Mayor had asked him to respond on her behalf. It was confirmed that the Mayor had not received the information relating to the event, neither had the Leader. If that information was provided, it would be circulated but not to all Council officers.

In his supplementary, Mr Smith stated that Rotherham had a proud history in supporting humanitarian causes in South Africa, Chile and Ukraine. He asked the Leader to extend the historical precedent and to work with Rotherham residents, especially Rotherham Palestinians. Residents had

invited the Mayor and the Leader to extend the invitation weeks in advance as a further step to developing a respectful working relationship. Mr Smith asked the Leader to confirm that those requested had been invited to the rising of the Palestinian flag for 5.30pm on 29 November as requested at the Cabinet meeting on 14 October? An email was sent but not responded to. Mr Smith also asked for how long the Ukrainian flag was raised on Council premises and asked for the appropriate documentation to be sent to their official email address. Finally, Mr Smith asked the Leader to confirm how the Council would be responding to the petition recommendations whilst involving the community.

The Leader reiterated that he had not received any information about an event people may be organising on the evening of 29 November and as such, could not send out an invitation. In relation to flag flying, the Leader explained that there were two separate processes. The first, which took precedence, was the guidance from the Government. The Ukrainian flag was flown in accordance with that guidance and was therefore flown for a number of weeks. The second process was that the Council could choose to make its own localised arrangements. Following the petition and recommendations from OSMB, the Palestinian flag will be flown on 29 November. This was a gesture of solidarity with the people suffering in Palestine. It was not helpful to anyone to compare how long flags flew for.

2. Mr A. Burton: How do you intend to proceed with the People's Palestine Petition recommendations whilst involving the community moving forward?

Mr Burton did not attend the meeting and, as such, would receive a written response.

3. Ms Carol Boote: Who is the Cabinet spokesperson?

The Leader stated that Councillor Sheppard – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Social Inclusion was the Cabinet Spokesperson in relation to the Gaza Petition recommendations.

In her supplementary, Ms Boote referenced a letter sent from Councillor Read to her colleague on 24 October 2024 where he had stated that the Council would continue to engage in dialogue with the petitioners, where appropriate, and where this could practically and constructively contribute to the objectives of peace in Palestine and the wider Middle East region. Ms Boote stated that there had been requests for divestment in Israel on numerous occasions. The Council's Solicitor had stated that this was categorically illegal. Ms Boote asked that, to ensure petitioners that this was not true, could Councillor Read commit to fulfil all the points of the petition in full and without delay? Could that written commitment be sent to the official email address? Yes or No?

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The Leader said no. The commitments that Cabinet had made, based on the OSMB recommendations and legal advice, had been clearly set out in good faith. The Leader could not overrule that and there would be no further commitments.

4. Mr Sabir Hussain: Eastwood has a high crime rate, high unemployment, health, inequality, poor aspirations, low incomes and overcrowding. How would a cycle lane and bus lane resolve these issues?

Councillor Taylor explained that cycle lanes and bus lane would not address those issues in their entirety. No single issue would. However, studies on schemes that had been embedded for much longer than those in the Rotherham Borough had shown that road casualties and street crime were reduced. The reduced emissions and more physical exercise resulted in better health outcomes. There was no expectation that the bus and cycle lanes would fix every issue in Eastwood. However, the current active travel consultation that was open proposed to use £4.6m of government grant to improve public transport through the area, support more people to cycle, improve the public environment and close subways many residents felt unsafe in. There was also a further £11m confirmed investment in housing on three sites in the Eastwood area which would ensure better access to high quality, affordable homes for local residents. The showed that the Council was working on a transformational proposal for people in that part of the borough.

5. Mr Nasser Alam: Why is the council proposing cycle lanes along Fitzwilliam road which will create destruction for residents, local businesses and commuters alike, when with hindsight similar schemes along Wellgate /Broom have had woeful effect on all concerned. Why have cycle lanes not been incorporated into the new cinema development or into the new tram/ train station link road for Parkgate?

Councillor Taylor stated that he did not accept the premise of the question. These points made previously also applied to the schemes delivered on Wellgate and Broom Road, which had used external funding to deliver significant improvements to the roads and footways and general appearance of the area, without any significant loss of parking or traffic capacity.

Regarding cycle lanes into the new cinema at Forge Island, new cycle lanes had been provided along Wellgate and Westgate, which linked into the town centre streets connecting into Forge Island, with the previous ban on cycles on Frederick Street also lifted. This included the new bridge provided to the development which was open to cyclists. The old bridge had not.

Regarding the Parkgate Link Road, this was led by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. This scheme was developed prior to the introduction of enhanced Government requirements in 2020 – had the

development of the scheme started after then, SYMCA would have included cycling measures to meet the Government's standards to access funding to deliver the scheme.

In his supplementary question Mr Alam asked if the Council had consulted the residents of Wellgate and Broom on how they feel about cycle lanes?

Councillor Taylor explained that he was not in post when the consultation for Wellgate and Broom was carried out. However, the current consultation for Eastwood was very significant. There had been a number of events and Councillor Taylor urged everyone to get involved with the consultation. Nothing had been imposed on anyone. The Council would consider all responses.

6. Ms Umamah Yusufi: During discussions with OSMB we suggested raising the Palestinian flag for the duration of the ongoing Genocide. What are your intentions for how long the Flag will be raised and do they comply with your legal obligations under the Equality Duty i.e. Will the Palestinian flag be raised for the same amount of time as the Ukrainian flag?

The Leader explained that the recommendation from OSMB was that the Palestinian Flag be flown on the United Nation's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November 2024) and this is what had been agreed. The Leader had explained earlier the different processes that had been gone through in relation to this and the flying of the Ukrainian Flag. The Equalities Act did not apply in this situation as it was not a matter of service provision. There should not be a competition over how long a flag should be flown. The length of time that a flag was flown did not reflect the strength of feeling about a situation. The flying of the Palestinian Flag was the Council's way of showing solidarity with those suffering. The Council was doing what was asked of it.

In her supplementary, Ms Yusufi stated that the petition process had taken far too long and that communication from the Council had not been good enough. Ms Yusufi stated that flying the flag for five hours on a Friday, when many Muslim's would be in Friday prayers and many Jewish people would be starting Sabbath, was an insult to what the Palestinian people had had to endure. She stated that the petitioners should have been consulted on the timings and she questioned where the role of democracy was in this process. The Ukrainian flag had been flown without a petition and without the level of upset from the Rotherham people.

The Leader explained that there was no length of time that the flag could be flown that would reflect the suffering in the Middle East or atone for that suffering. Cabinet and the Council had agreed to do what was asked of them by OSMB. Councillor Sheppard was available to speak with the petitioners if they wanted to. The Leader reiterated the different processes for flying the flag and explained that flags could not be flown for every incident.

The “event” the Leader was referring to was the flying of the flag on 29 November. The gathering of people later in the afternoon/evening on 29 November was arranged by the petitioners and he had no further information on this.

Following a request from the Leader, the Mayor allowed Ms Yusufi to respond. Ms Yusufi agreed that this was a token gesture. She suggested that a better gesture would be to impose sanctions on Israel and have an arms embargo. She stated that arms were being produced in South Yorkshire which would kill children in Gaza. The flying of the flag was just the start to show that the people of Rotherham cared about what was going on. The response from the Council had been very disappointing.

The Leader was sorry that Ms Yusufi felt like that but he believed that the Council had been asked to do things and were doing the things that they were able to do. He recognised the strength of feeling but neither he nor the Council could impose sanctions on Israel or start an arms embargo. The Leader’s job was to run Council services in Rotherham and that had to be the top priority.

7. Mr Abrar Javid: What advantage has been seen in the Wellgate/broom bicycle lane scheme, that you think an expansion in Eastwood would benefit from it?

Mr Javid withdrew his question at the meeting as it had already been asked and answered.

8. Mr M Ashraf: Following Israel’s widespread, indiscriminate terroristic electronic devices bombing campaign which caused untold mayhem and civilian deaths especially among the Lebanese medical sector and even children. Will the Council Leader and Chief Executive condemn these actions and as it is in their power to do so, raise the Lebanese flag like they have done for other nations that suffered terrorism?

The Leader referred Mr Ashraf to the answers given previously. All war crimes and human rights abuses were condemned. The Council could not commit to responding to every act of violence that took place during the current war in the Middle East. There was no commitment to fly the Lebanese flag or the Iranian Flag or any other flag. Views had been expressed to the former Conservative Government and to the current Labour Government that they should use all available diplomatic levers to bring peace to the region.

In his supplementary Mr Ashraf stated that the Lebanese were again the wrong colour. He referenced the riot that took place in August in Manvers and asked for equality before the law. Mr Ashraf then talked about the definition of terrorism and suggested that Israel had links to ISIS. He asked the Leader whether he would provide a commitment to fully divest from the ISIS-funding Israel? He also asked the Leader for a timeline of

when the IHRA definition of antisemitism would be removed. He asked every Rotherham Councillor to give a written commitment to fulfilling all the points of the petition and to send that commitment to the official email address.

The Leader explained that these were all points that were considered by OSMB as part of the petition process. No further commitments would be made in relation to the matters raised. A view in support of the Palestinian people had been taken. The Council would be the first in South Yorkshire to fly the Palestinian flag and were not doing anything actively that would support military aggression in the middle east. The Leader asked Mr Ashraf to accept the outcome and that the Council had acted in good faith

9. Mr Masood Hanif: What specific data or evidence supports the decision against a cycle lane on a busy major A road lead, particularly in terms of safety and traffic flow for all road user?

Mr Hanif did not attend the meeting and, as such, would receive a written response.

10. Ms Roswana Khan: Why has the Council Leader Read not flown the Palestinian flag after the horrendous Genocide we have all witnessed for the past 13 months? If you can raise it for months on end for the Ukrainians. You can have the decency to raise it for the Palestinians who have suffered unimaginable War Crimes, Ethnic-Cleansing and Genocide.

Ms Khan did not attend the meeting and, as such, would receive a written response.

11. Mr Tony Mabbott: Since the Israeli invasion of Gaza in October 2023, occupying forces have deliberately targeted infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and water and electricity supplies, and continued bombing civilians, all against international law. Given this, will Rotherham Council support flying the Palestinian flag outside Council buildings for the same length of time as it flew the Ukraine flag after February 2022?

The Leader explained that he had nothing further to add as he had responded to similar questions earlier in the meeting.

In his supplementary, Mr Mabbott explained that the group had been in discussions with a teacher in Gaza who had stated that all the schools and some of the hospitals had been bombed as a part of a deliberate strategy. Tens of thousands of children had lost their lives. As Rotherham was to be the Children's Capital of Culture, Mr Mabbott saw it as an international opportunity to raise the plight of children in Gaza. He asked the Leader to consider this.

The Leader explained that he would consider what could be done. However, a lot of the funding for the Children's Capital of Culture did have rules and regulations regarding what the funding could be used for. The Council would have to ensure they adhered to all these rules and regulations.

77. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no such items that required the exclusion of the press and public from this meeting.

78. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader was invited to present his statement. He stated that he was conscious that it was a long agenda with many questions. If a significant numbers of Members had left the meeting before the end, the Leader confirmed that he would want to draw the meeting to a close. Members would receive answers to their questions in writing.

The Leader highlighted the following:

Work had started on the site for a new café at Rother Valley Country Park. The works were part of a series of £7.4m improvements at the park which were long awaited.

Work had started on the new housing and independent living development on Warden Street in Canklow as part of the Castle Hill development. This was an £11m scheme which would bring state of the art facilities for people with learning disabilities.

Demolition works had started at Rotherham Markets with the demolition of the former Drummond Street shops – also known as the Guardian Centre buildings, paving the way for the development's brand-new town centre library. This was the second biggest investment in the town centre.

Residents living in Rotherham could once again receive support with their energy bills this winter, as the latest round of the Council's Crisis Support Scheme opened for application. The scheme offered payments of up to £250 for households that were struggling to meet the costs of their energy bills as a result of the significant rise in energy costs. The Leader urged Members to help residents access that support.

In conclusion, the Leader passed on his thanks to the team involved with the Bonfire Night event at Clifton Park which was very successful.

Councillor Currie stated that it would be better for the meetings to be held at 10am. He also asked that, if the meeting did finish early, could supplementary questions be emailed in for a written response?

The Leader confirmed that they could if this happened.

Councillor Reynolds asked a question in relation to the laying of tarmac and why it was rippling. He also asked if the new entrance to Parkgate would be open in time for the Christmas rush?

The Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided in relation to the tarmac question. He also confirmed that he expected the new entrance at Parkgate to open shortly. The delay had been due to flooding and drainage issues.

Councillor Z Collingham stated that the way in which public questions were being presented and asked was not beneficial to the questioners, the Members or anyone watching. This was an ongoing issue and the rules continued to be broken. He asked if the matter could be looked at on a cross-party basis as it was detailing the meeting.

The Leader agreed entirely with the comments. The Constitution Working Group would look into the matters raised.

Councillor Bacon asked why the Leader did not mention the Budget in his statement.

The Leader stated that he believed the Budget was a triumph for public services and the best for public services for 15 years. The Chancellor had been given a choice between making the austerity errors like George Osborne had in 2010 or making some difficult decisions to point the economy in the right direction. This chosen option would put money back into council services. The allocations for Rotherham had not yet been confirmed.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if conversations could be started regarding whether the Castle View development could be used by families fostering children with disabilities?

The Leader agreed to look into the question.

Councillor Steele asked why Members were not using scrutiny to ask Cabinet Members questions on policy and procedure? He asked the Leader if the Constitution could be looked at as the cut off from questions from Members used to be 20 minutes. He also urged Members to use the proper procedures for getting questions answered.

The Leader agreed and stated that the Constitution Working Group would look into the matters raised.

Councillor Bower referenced the event at Clifton Park which he thought was great. He had however been approached by residents who felt unsafe, and Councillor Bower felt there was a lack of stewarding and security. He asked the Leader if this could be reviewed?

The Leader stated that an internal review would take place.

79. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 16 September and 14 October 2024.

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 16 September and 14 October 2024 be received.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Sheppard

80. CABINET'S RESPONSE TO THE IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION SCRUTINY REVIEW - NATURE RECOVERY

Consideration was given to the report which presented Cabinet's response to the Improving Places Select Commission Scrutiny Review on Nature Recovery. On 25 May 2022, Council resolved to declare a Nature Crisis for Rotherham. It noted that almost half of all UK wildlife was in long-term decline, with 15% of species at risk of extinction. The motion stated that the climate crisis was hastening the destruction of the natural environment, damaging habitats, and disrupting ecosystems. The declaration of a Nature Crisis was first taken up by local people and groups; the motion called on the Council to do the same, noting that a thriving natural environment underpinned a healthy, prosperous society.

The recommendations resulting from the 2023 review were endorsed by OSMB in March 2024, and presented to Cabinet in June 2024. On 16 September 2024, Cabinet approved its response. The key issues, risks and recommendations were therefore detailed within Appendix 1 and 2 of the report.

Resolved:

1. That Council note Cabinet's response to the recommendations summarised in the report – Cabinet Response to the Improving Places Scrutiny Review – Nature Recovery at Appendix 1 and 2.

Mover:- Councillor Sheppard

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

81. NOTICE OF MOTION - A BAD START FROM THE NEW LABOUR GOVERNMENT

An amendment to the original motion was accepted by the mover and seconder of the original Motion and, therefore, further to Procedure Rule 18(14) the amendment was incorporated into the Motion for debate (inclusions highlighted in bold italics).

The original Motion and amendment were moved by Councillor A Carter and Councillor Tarmey.

That this Council notes that:

1. The Labour Party won a majority in the 2024 general election to form the Government of the UK with a manifesto that included a pledge not to increase taxes for working people.
2. There was no manifesto commitment to the removal of universal winter fuel payments for pensioners.
3. Rotherham Labour Group proposed a motion in recent years condemning the removal of the £20 Universal Credit uplift, which was passed by the Council.
4. Inflation has recently returned to below the Bank of England target, and this has happened more rapidly than forecast earlier this year which provides the government with more fiscal headroom to support working people.
5. ***The Government has announced they are going to increase the bus fare cap to £3 per journey in 2025.***
6. ***The Government has announced that regulated rail fares in England are to rise by 4.6% from 2nd March 2025.***
7. ***The Government has chosen to keep a freeze on the personal allowance until 2028/29 financial year, increasing the amount of tax working people on the national living wage will pay.***
8. ***The Chancellor has listened to Liberal Democrat calls for an increase in the carer's allowance earning threshold, meaning that 60,000 more carers will be able to keep Government support while continuing to work.***
9. ***The Government's Budget will "leave the size of the economy largely unchanged at the end of the five-year forecast period", according to the Office for Budget Responsibility analysis.***

That this Council believes that:

1. Promises made in an election manifesto of a party who wins a parliamentary majority should not be broken.
2. Self-employed people, and employees of small and medium sized businesses are 'working people'.
3. Self-employed people may be liable for employee and employer national insurance contributions.
4. The private sector is an essential part of our economy and is key to economic growth, job creation, and revenue for the Treasury.
5. Increasing the tax burden for the self-employed and small and medium sized businesses risks fewer jobs, lower growth, and redundancies.
6. The Government should reinstate the Universal Credit uplift as the council resolved in recent years.

7. The borough's three MPs - John Healey, Sarah Champion and Jake Richards - were wrong to vote to remove universal winter fuel payments for pensioners.
8. ***Working people who use public transport should not be made to pay above inflation bus and train fare increases to get to work.***
9. ***It is wrong that low-income working people will have to pay more tax due to this Budget.***
10. ***Carers in receipt of carer's allowance should be able to work alongside their care responsibilities, without being penalised for doing so.***

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Ask group leaders to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the borough's three MPs, asking them to oppose hikes to tax and national insurance for the self-employed and small to medium sized businesses.
2. Express its regret that the borough's three MPs voted to remove universal winter fuel payments.
3. Ask group leaders to write the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the borough's three MPs to ask them to reinstate the Universal Credit uplift, ***and to oppose above inflation train and bus fare increases.***

On being put to the vote the Motion fell.

82. NOTICE OF MOTION - REMEMBERING ALL THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED AND SACRIFICED FOR OUR COUNTRY

An amendment to the original motion was accepted by the mover and seconder of the original Motion and, therefore, further to Procedure Rule 18(14) the amendment was incorporated into the Motion for debate (inclusions highlighted in bold italics).

The original Motion was moved by Councillor Tarmey and seconded by Councillor C Carter. The amendment was moved by Councillor Tinsley and seconded by Councillor Baum-Dixon.

That this Council:

1. Thanks military veterans for their service to our country.
2. Recognises the sacrifices that military personnel have made during their service to our country.
3. Commits to always remember those who have lost their lives in their military service for our country.
4. Is grateful of the work charities such as the Royal British Legion and others do in supporting all our military veterans.

5. Recognises the role played by local charities for their invaluable work in supporting the financial, physical health, and mental health needs of our military veterans.
6. Believes that historical armed forces policies that were in place as late as the year 2000, discriminated against LGBT+ people and have done significant harm to those military personnel: both by discharging them from the military; or the effect that hiding that their identity had on mental health during someone's military service.
7. Notes that the Royal British Legion have introduced Pride Poppies to commemorate the contribution of LGBT+ military personnel to the armed forces and resolves to fully support this initiative.
8. Believes that the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Sunday are inclusive events where we remember and thank all our military personnel and veterans irrespective of background, orientation, religion, or personal beliefs.
9. ***Reaffirms its commitment to supporting Remembrance parades across the Borough, including providing Traffic Management Orders to ensure safety.***
10. ***Notes the importance of cenotaphs and war memorials as spaces for veterans, residents and communities to gather, show respect and participate in acts of remembrance.***
11. ***Commits, where the Council is the custodian of memorials and cenotaphs, to maintaining these sites with adequate funding and resources, recognising their significance for veterans and local communities.***

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

83. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee be noted.

Mover: Councillor Marshall

Seconder: Councillor Baggaley

84. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board be noted.

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

85. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Hughes

Seconder: Councillor Beresford

86. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Planning Board be noted.

Mover: Councillor Williams

Seconder: Councillor Mault

87. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Monk

Seconder: Councillor Clarke

88. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were 6 questions for the designated spokespersons:

1. Councillor Baum-Dixon: Please could you give the council an update on the situation regarding the errors in the South Yorkshire Police accounts and forecasts, which we are led to believe could total almost £65m, including an overview of the error and why it happened, what steps are being taken to prevent this happening again and the potential impact upon policing in Rotherham?

Councillor Harper, Spokesperson on South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel, explained that the South Yorkshire Mayor had commissioned a review into the matter. The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and South Yorkshire Police were working with the Government to determine sustainable solutions. Work was also underway to determine the impact on services should savings be required. It would not be appropriate to speculate on the outcomes of the review and investigations.

In his supplementary, Councillor Baum-Dixon stated that this was a cross-party issue, and everyone needed to work together to stop it from happening again. Given that the auditors in this situation were Grant Thornton and Rotherham Council's auditors were also Grant Thornton, Councillor Baum-Dixon suggested that the Audit Committee look into whether the Council still had confidence in Grant Thornton's abilities to conduct a thorough audit of Council finances.

Councillor Harper confirmed that he was happy to work on a cross-party basis.

2. Councillor Currie: What is the percentage of meetings you have attended since you were placed on the panel?

It was confirmed that both Councillor Harper and Councillor Baum-Dixon had attended one out of the two meetings (50%).

In his supplementary question, Councillor Currie stated that Councillor Baum-Dixon had been on the Panel for a number of years. The £65m error was an accounting error and it should have been scrutinized by Members on the Panel. He asked if Councillor Baum-Dixon would resign?

As Councillor Baum-Dixon was not the Designated Spokesperson he was not asked to respond during the meeting.

3. Councillor Ball: How much additional pressure will the increase in NI cause to the finances of SYP and will you provide a forecast of how much this will cost to implement these labour tax hikes?

Councillor Ball did not attend the meeting and, as such, would receive a written response.

4. Councillor Ball: How much additional pressure will the increase in NI cause to the finances of SYFR and will you provide a forecast of how much this will cost to implement these labour tax hikes?

Councillor Ball did not attend the meeting and, as such, would receive a written response.

5. Councillor A Carter: Do you think the £65 million black hole in South Yorkshire Police's Budget shows that the previous Police and Crime Commissioner, as well as the South Yorkshire Mayor have failed in their duty to local taxpayers?

Councillor Harper answered no to the question. He explained that it was too early to start blaming people. With regard to the South Yorkshire Mayor, he was not responsible for South Yorkshire Police at the time. The responsibility was with the then Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Carter stated that this pointed to a failure of the overall Police and Crime Commissioner role; it did not bring the relevant expertise to the table. Whilst Councillor Carter was glad the role had gone, he did not believe that the South Yorkshire Mayor was in a position to fully scrutinise it. Councillor Carter asked what commitments Councillor Harper would give to say that the failures

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would not impact front lines services and staffing levels within the Police? Would it cost South Yorkshire taxpayers more money in the long term?

Councillor Harper explained that both panel Members would commit to scrutinising what they were told, and the information provided. However, it was not within their power to control the Budget.

6. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can you please advise on what work is being done to scrutinise the reported £65m "black hole" in the policing Budget and potential impact on frontline services?

Councillor Harper reiterated that there was an investigation ongoing. He hoped some answers would be provided at the next meeting of the Panel in December 2024. Councillor Harper would feedback whenever he got some information.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that it was a concerning situation and he asked if the scrutiny function itself would be reviewed in order to look at practices and make sure everything was as it should be? This would build confidence in the scrutiny function and prevent a similar situation.

Councillor Harper stated that the Panel Members he had met so far were serious, honest people who would not allow something similar to happen again. There would be increased scrutiny.

89. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 41 questions:

1. Councillor C Carter: Parents are rightly frustrated about the dangerous parking, lack of crossing patrol, and infrequent parking enforcement outside Brinsworth Manor Infant and Junior Schools. How will the council make things safer?

Councillor Taylor explained that this was a good example of how walking and cycling were important to communities, and dealing with parking and providing safe crossing points was part of that.

At present, available funding for transport infrastructure improvements was fully allocated until 2027. Brinsworth Ward Members had chosen to allocate their Local Neighbourhood and Road Safety Fund to a higher priority elsewhere in the ward. However, officers would record the concern so it could be considered should funding become available in future.

In her supplementary, Councillor Carter asked if patrols could be increased in the area or if patrols within the town centre could be

diverted schools in villages in order to improve safety? She also asked what additional measures could be considered.

Councillor Taylor explained that there had been some patrols, but it was a finite resource. So far this year Civil Enforcement Officers had carried out patrols both on foot and in the CCTV vehicle on 4 occasions outside Brinsworth Manor Infant and Junior Schools to enforce the no waiting restrictions and had issued 2 Penalty Charge Notices. The Council would continue with the enforcement action. Councillor Taylor encouraged Councillor Carter to report the matter again if the situation continued or got worse and it would be looked into further.

2. Councillor Thorp: The Budget has raised employers NIC and lowered the threshold that the employer starts to pay employer NIC, could you confirm how much per year this is going to cost RMBC?

Councillor Alam explained that the Government had indicated that employer NI increases for local authorities would be funded by increases in grant. It was not anticipated that there would be any net loss of funding. The Council was awaiting detail on how any grant awards would be transacted.

Councillor Thorp stated that care workers and similar workers were employed by companies on behalf of the Council. He asked how the Council would pay the extra money since those companies would surely have to pay the raised employer National Insurance Contributions and therefore the cost to the Council would increase.

Councillor Alam confirmed that officers were looking at the details following the Budget announcement. The core cost to the Council would be funded by the Government.

3. Councillor Ball: Can the Leader inform me if he will be applying to GB energy to supply small scale clean energy projects such as solar panels on council houses, schools and hospitals?

Councillor Ball did not attend the meeting and, as such, would receive a written response.

4. Councillor Cusworth will you join with me in offering congratulations to the LEAF centre based at Rockingham J&I school in being awarded the title of "Alternative Provision of the Year " by NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs). in recognition of their work supporting Rotherham Children with SEMH needs.

Councillor Cusworth was delighted to join in offering heartfelt congratulations to the LEAF Centre at Rockingham J&I School for being awarded the prestigious title of "Alternative Provision of the Year" by NASEN (National Association for Special Educational

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Needs). This recognition was a testament to their dedication and impactful work in supporting children in Rotherham with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Their commitment to creating a nurturing and inclusive environment was truly commendable. Councillor Cusworth said well done to the entire team at the LEAF Centre and would write them a congratulatory letter.

In his supplementary, Councillor Elliott stated that he had particular pride in the LEAF centre as it was in his ward and he and other ward Members at the time had played a significant role in getting it built and established. A grant of £140k was secured from Rotherham Borough Council. Councillor Elliott explained that it was therefore difficult to understand why the provision was not used by RMBC. It was not even on the map of provision sent to Members. He asked if Councillor Cusworth would investigate the lack of use and, at the very least, make sure it was reinstated on the map?

Councillor Cusworth confirmed that it was an oversight that it was not on the map and she would ensure that this had been rectified by the service. In relation to the grant funding, Councillor Cusworth explained that this had been a good investment because the provision was still there for the children of Rotherham. It was explained that LEAF offered a 12-week step out provision for children with SEMH needs. There was an expectation from the Department for Education that schools, not the Council, commission those services. There had been a pilot scheme that had shown that getting children into the provision early did not prevent the need for Education Health and Care Plans. Councillor Cusworth reiterate that it was a fantastic centre and she planned to visit. Alternative provision was commissioned by Aspire.

5. Councillor Thorp: Could the Cabinet member tell me how the impact of vacant premises at Forge Island on its projected Revenue?

Councillor Alam explained that the Council had agreed the Forge Island development for the purposes of regeneration of the Town Centre, not as a commercial venture. The Cabinet approval for the scheme was that it would pay for itself over the life of the development. The scheme was projected to do so through a complex financial model which included provision for periods of time when some of the units could be empty. The Council were negotiating with a number of potential new tenants and as such, were not concerned about the implications of this.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp asked for an update in relation to food outlets as he understood that Rustic Pizza had pulled out?

Councillor Alam explained that negotiations were ongoing with a number of different tenants.

6. Councillor Thorp: If we have a revenue shortfall due to vacant premises, how do you plan to mitigate this problem and does this affect the loan repayments?

Councillor Alam explained that the Cabinet approval for the scheme was that it would pay for itself over the life of the development and it was still projected to do so. The financial model also assumed that the borrowing would be charged to the service from the first year after completion of the scheme (this was the standard approach). The scheme completed in quarter 1 2024/25, so borrowing would be charged from 2025/26. The Council were assured that the vacant premises would not cause long term problems.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp stated that it would be hard to get tenants in when so many had pulled out already. There would also be increased costs due to the rise in employer National Insurance Contributions and potential tenants did not know what the footfall would be like. Further, the Council had given up on chasing the Westgate for nearly £0.5 million.

Councillor Alam confirmed that Council officers were working with the developers to attract tenants.

7. Councillor Z Collingham: Can the Leader outline the information he currently has regarding the shape of 2025/26 core funding allocation for local government and by extension RMBC, following the recent Government Budget?

The Leader stated that he could not speculate as the final settlement had not yet been received. In the Budget, the Chancellor had announced an extra £1.2 billion of core funding for Local Authorities as part of a £3.5 billion pack of funding which will benefit Local Authorities. The exact numbers for Rotherham would be published as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update once confirmed.

In his supplementary, Councillor Collingham asked if the Leader was disappointed like he was that there was nothing in the Budget about reforms to social care funding? The proposals brought forward by Theresa May a number of years ago had been ruined by the Labour Party and, more recently, the Dilnot report had been shelved.

In response, the Leader made reference to “Gordon Brown’s Death Tax” and how neither party had managed to work together to reform Adult Social Care. He claimed that he was not disappointed in the sense that he would have been very surprised if it was in the Chancellor’s first Budget. The principle of reforming the way in which Adult Social Care was funded absolutely needed to be resolved.

8. This question had been withdrawn.

9. Councillor Z Collingham: Over a year after Cabinet approved the Dinnington Levelling Up scheme, there remains land to be acquired to start work. What reassurance can you provide that this will happen in time and that if the Compulsory Purchasing Order (CPO) process has to be engaged it can be completed before the funding deadline in March 2026?

Councillor Taylor explained that the scheme aimed to tackle years of under investment by the private sector and in doing this the Council had the challenging job of acquiring all property interests.

In the year since funding was allocated, the Council had successfully acquired or was in the process of concluding negotiations on the majority of all land holdings required to facilitate the Dinnington scheme. It was always the Council's objective to acquire property interests by negotiation and CPO powers were always a last resort. However, where necessary and in the absence of an alternative approach, the Council was committed to utilising its CPO powers. To this end, Cabinet committed to making a CPO order in October 2024 and this process was now underway.

The extent and therefore timescales to complete a CPO was to some degree out of Council control. However the current anticipated timeline aimed to see CPO matters concluding before the end of March 2026.

10. Councillor Z Collingham: The Labour Government has announced huge changes to agricultural inheritance tax reliefs in their recent Budget; does you share my concern that these will sound the death knell for small, cash poor, family-run farms across our Borough, leading to more of our countryside being owned by landowners and big business outside of Rotherham?

Councillor Sheppard did not share the concerns that this would affect the majority of small, family run farms. According to an economics professor at the University of Warwick, a married couple owning a farm together could split it in two, which would mean a farm worth £3 million would not pay inheritance tax. Councillor Sheppard stated that some prominent individuals had railed against this decision including one that had said previously that avoiding inheritance tax was the critical thing in their decision to buy a farm. Councillor Sheppard was very pleased that the changes had been introduced as it would mean that wealthy people who had hoovered up farmland in order to avoid inheritance tax would no longer be able to do so. That would hopefully see a return to more family run farms in Rotherham and across the country.

Councillor Collingham asked if Councillor Sheppard really believed that people bought farms to avoid inheritance tax? 70% of the Borough was rural – did Councillor Sheppard believe the farmers in that 70%

were looking to avoid tax rather than work the land and pass it on to their children?

Councillor Sheppard explained that that was not what he had said at all. He had quoted an individual that had done that. When sorting out the mess that the country's finances had been left in, Councillor Sheppard stated that actioned needed to be taken against people who had taken advantage of things like this. The country needed excellent public services, and no one should live in poverty.

11. Councillor Collingham: Can you confirm how many people responded to the recent consultation on the Council Plan for 2025 and any trends in the issues and priorities raised?

The Leader explained that the trends were not yet known as the team were still working through the responses. There had been 1,700 interactions across all methods of engagement as part of the consultation process. This was up by 400 interactions compared with the consultation in 2021. A summary of the responses would be produced and shared as the new Plan was developed. A Members session was planned for 12 November.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Collingham stated, whilst it was great that the number was up, 1,700 was still not a lot of people. In order for the Council Plan to have a democratic mandate and deliver what residents wanted, did the Council need to drive up the numbers?

The Leader agreed that he would like to see as many people involved as possible. The team had tried to make responding as easy as possible and they had been out meeting people face to face in a variety of places. They had written out to 500 randomly selected households in the Borough but only 8% had responded. There was also online activity and focus groups. The Leader thought the team did well to get the levels of interactions they did. He also stated that it was the responsibility of elected Members to act on behalf of their residents.

12. Councillor A Carter: Given the council leader disagrees with the housing target for Rotherham imposed by the new Government, how does the cabinet member think we can achieve building the houses we need in this country?

Councillor Taylor stated that he too disagreed with the housing target. He acknowledged that the Council did have a responsibility to build the houses that the country desperately needed to address years of undersupply and affordability issues in some parts of the country. But as the Leader set out in the last meeting, if simply allocating more land gave more homes in Rotherham, it would have been doing that for the last two decades, but it had not. Using the new methodology,

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Rotherham's housing target would increase from the current figure of 544 to 1,233 which was an increase of 127%. Councillor Taylor did not think that was achievable.

In his supplementary, Councillor Carter stated that when the Local Plan had been agreed, a previous Cabinet Member had lauded the fact that they had negotiated to reduce the target. However, since Sheffield had now had their target reduced under the new methodology, Rotherham were being asked to do more. Councillor Carter asked if the Labour Group in Rotherham were acting as NIMBY's in regard to planning and asked if Councillor Taylor agreed that the Labour Government's plan for building new houses was destined to fail.

Councillor Taylor stated that Sheffield had not had their number reduced due to being more successful at housebuilding. They had been awarded an uplift by the previous government and that figure had since been adjusted.

As a Local Authority, Councillor Taylor stated that he believed Rotherham Council had done everything it could to promote housebuilding. In the representations made to government, the Council had asked for help in moving forward the 4,800 homes that already had planning permission but that had not been built, as well as significant additional financial support to deliver truly affordable homes that Rotherham families needed.

13. Councillor A Carter: Do you think it is fair that people who rely on bus travel working low paid jobs will now have to work an extra hour to pay for the £1 hike in bus fares?

The Leader explained that, prior to the new Government's autumn statement, the national bus fare cap of £2 was to end entirely from January 2025. The proposal was that fares would be set as a wholly commercial decision by private bus operators, without any cap or means for the Council, Passenger Transport Executive or others being able to influence this. It was highly unlikely operators would have chosen to hold fares as low as £3 without the continuation of the fare cap. Prior to the cap fares had been as high as £3.50 and beyond. Moving the cap to £3 was more sustainable and therefore a sensible compromise.

In his supplementary, Councillor Carter stated that the bus service was not reliable and was outdated. He asked if the Leader agreed that Mayor Coppard needed to get on with the job of franchising the buses and making sure it was fit for the purpose.

The Leader stated that he supported franchising and that the competitive processes of running bus services had failed totally. He encouraged everyone to take part in the consultation. Franchising

would not address the big issue of buses getting stuck in congestion. The Leader was confused by some of the opposition to bus priority measures. If people wanted buses to run on time and more reliably, they needed to give up road space to buses. Franchising would help but more funding was required to fully improve the services.

14. Councillor A Carter: Do you believe that Rotherham is losing out because the South Yorkshire Mayor has failed to secure one of the first integrated settlements of funding in the recent Budget?

The Leader responded by saying that he did not believe that because the Mayor had secured one of the first integrated settlements of funding in the recent Budget.

15. Councillor A Carter: Elsewhere in South Yorkshire the social prescribing scheme has been curtailed or stopped. Will you commit to maintaining the social prescribing service within the borough?

Councillor Baker-Rogers stated that the commitment had already been made.

In his supplementary, Councillor Carter asked how the social prescribing scheme had benefitted Rotherham residents?

Councillor Baker-Rogers confirmed she would respond in writing.

16. Councillor A Carter: Do you think that the Government's proposed changes to the national insurance contributions could jeopardise vital apprenticeships in the borough?

The Leader hoped that that would not be the case. He stated that cutting public services and running down the private sector economy would jeopardise apprenticeships. There was always a balance to be made. The Leader believed that the right judgement had been made. Across the Council's partnerships there was a commitment to 400 apprenticeships over the next four years.

In his supplementary, Councillor Carter stated that it was reassuring to hear that the Council's own apprenticeship commitment was not under threat. However, he was worried about the apprenticeships in the private sector. He asked how the Council and Labour Government could support those.

The Leader stated that the team within the Council were on hand to provide specialist support to private sector businesses looking to take on apprentices. In terms of the Government, there were suggestions regarding reforming the Apprenticeship Levy and improving flexibility.

17. Councillor A Carter: How will the council leader make sure that Rotherham gets a fair deal from future integrated settlements and stop

all the money just being used in Sheffield?

The Leader explained that all of the money was not used in Sheffield. He suspected that Doncaster had the largest single proportion of funding coming through the SYMCA. The reason for that was that the money followed where the best return on investment was. A big scheme such as Doncaster Sheffield Airport required a big allocation of funding. However there were arrangements in place to ensure each Local Authority area got its share. The money had to go to the best projects, business and schemes to support the whole of the South Yorkshire economy. Rotherham did very well at fighting its corner in those discussions.

In his supplementary, Councillor Carter stated that this was reassuring. His main concern was that the Mayoral funding had many strict conditions on how it could be spent. He asked if the Leader shared his concerns that this could lead to fewer schemes in Rotherham? He did place on record the Liberal Democrats support for Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

The Leader stated that he was not concerned about that. He was worried that the single settlement funding would come with so many targets that the money would be stretched too thinly. Although the large amount of funding sounding like anything could be done, the requirements as set out by Government would limit how it could be used.

18. Councillor A Carter: After years of failure, how is the cabinet member planning to stop years of social care overspend?

Councillor Baker-Rogers stated that Councillor Carter was wrong as for the financial years 2021/22; 2022/23; 2023/24; Adult Social did not overspend. There had always been funding pressures in Adult Social care often relating to increasing costs of providing and commissioning care services, increasing demand, complexity of more people who are eligible for adult social care. The Council would continue to manage those pressures using the best Budgeting information it had, and by building on the strengths-based approach to give people maximum independence whilst prioritizing spend where it was most needed.

In his supplementary, Councillor A Carter queried the impact of the employer National Insurance Contribution increase on the Council's Adult Social Care providers and subsequently the Council's Budget. What measures were being taken to mitigate that?

Councillor Baker-Rogers was committed to ensuring spend met need and the Council would continue to work with thirds parties as normal.

19. Councillor A Carter: What demographic analysis has the council conducted on out of area placements compared to those who are placed within the borough?

Councillor Cusworth explained that the Council were committed to ensuring that children had the best possible start in life and endeavoured to house children in care as close to their family home as possible.

Analysis of the data showed that, although 52% of children were placed outside the LA boundary, 80.2% of those were placed within 20 miles (as at 30/09/24). Within 20 miles meant anywhere from 1 mile up to 20 miles. Those figures had been steadily improving for years, with the number of children placed within 20 miles now considerably better than the regional and national averages.

Demographic analysis was undertaken for all children in care, with a particular focus on children in external residential placements, where children were often living further away from their network and community than the Council would like. Demographic analysis indicated that boys aged between 10 years and 15 years were most likely to be placed more than 20 miles from Rotherham. There were no significant differences in ethnic makeup compared to the wider cohort of Looked After Children. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children were more likely to be placed more than 20 miles away, but this was often in line with their own wishes or to provide placements meeting their language or religious needs. This matter was often discussed at the Improving Lives Select Commission and at the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

In his supplementary, Councillor A Carter stated that it was reassuring that there was no ethnic difference. He asked whether it was a national trend that teenage boys aged between 10-15 were most likely to be placed more than 20 miles away or if this was unique to Rotherham? Did it cause harm to the young boys in terms of development and progression to adult life?

Councillor Cusworth did not have that information available but would provide a written response. She did state that it was always preferable to keep children closer to home if this benefited the children. Sometimes it was necessary to place children out of area. Additional placement stability training was taking place with social workers to enable them to access support as soon as possible. The offer for children that lived out of area was also being reviewed. Placement disruptions had reduced but finding foster carers for pre-teen and teenage boys was still very difficult.

20. Councillor C Carter: Adam and I share the frustration of residents that the upgrade to parking outside the Brinsworth Lane shops still hasn't started. Will you now commit to a timeframe for delivery of this project?

Councillor Sheppard explained that the challenging aspect of this scheme had been securing the necessary landowner permissions to undertake the work. This had led to a number of delays to the scheme commencing. However, that issue was now resolved and a contract price for the work had now been received and was currently being evaluated ready for contract award. The Council anticipated work to start on site early in the new year with completion before the end of the financial year.

In her supplementary, Councillor Carter asked whether Council officers had been diverted to focus on other priority projects and therefore the Brinsworth project had not been given the attention it needed? The project was seven months delayed. Councillor Carter asked for reassurance that Councillor Sheppard would personally ensure that this project got the attention it needed and ensure that it would stick to the timeline just provided?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that the project had not been deprioritised and the Council would do their best to deliver the project as soon as possible for the people of Brinsworth.

21. Councillor Yasseen: How does the Council justify the arbitrary timing for raising the Palestinian flag, excluding many from this symbolic gesture, and made without consulting lead petitioners, including Dr Sahar Awadallah, representing Rotherham's Palestinian community and thousands of residents? Would you agree this approach lacks transparency and is a significant oversight?

The Leader did not agree with this comment. There had been a Scrutiny Working Group that Councillor Yasseen had been part of that had made a number of recommendations. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered those recommendations and Councillor Yasseen was again part of that process. What had been done was exactly what had been asked for. In relation to the flag, the Leader stated that he had concerns about flying the flag overnight as it could be damaged which would be harmful. He was however happy to look at what arrangements could be made. The Leader noted that Councillor Yasseen had not contacted him about this issue prior to the day of the meeting.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that she had contacted the Council along with many individuals. The reason the Leader had not been contacted was that he had not been party to any of the discussions in OSMB. Councillor Yasseen confirmed that she had personally contacted after the event on 23 October to update the

community on the petition. As it happened, the Leader had sent a letter to the lead petitioner with a summary of the outcomes. An email had been sent to the Chief Executive and Councillor Yasseen had assumed that the Leader and the officer leadership of the Council had discussed this as it was quite a lengthy email. A response had been received and that is when the petitioners were informed about the flag flying timings. That was why there had been frustration from Members of the public earlier in the meeting. Councillor Yasseen believed that the implementation of the recommendations from OSMB would be done in partnership with residents. This would stop them from having to come to Council meetings and express their frustration about the process. Councillor Yasseen stated that the Council was not working in a collaborative way.

After the response to her email, Councillor Yasseen had informed the community that the Council's plan was to fly the flag from 12 noon until 5pm on Friday 29 November. It was explained that four of the five Muslim prayers would fall within that timeframe. This showed a lack of consideration. A day had 24 hours. Councillor Yasseen asked for the flag to be flown all day, if not longer and she asked that the Council honour the agreement that had been made.

The Leader stated that it was not appropriate to send the Chief Executive emails expected for him. It would be odd and dangerous for the Chief Executive to share every email she received with him. The Leader confirmed that the Council would not be in a position to fly the flag for 24 hours. He would not instruct a member of staff to raise the flag at midnight and take it down again 24 hours later. That was not reasonable. For reasons already outlined, the Leader stated it would not be a good idea to fly the flag overnight. In the past, flags had attracted unwanted attention and criminal damage. If there was a request to lower the flag later in the evening in order to tie-in with the community events, the Leader would action that. A confrontational approach was not helping the situation and the Leader asked for Councillor Yasseen's assistance in ending this approach.

22. Councillor Yasseen: Do you agree that Herringthorpe Playing Fields has a legally protected purpose as a recreational and leisure space, with historical significance to Rotherham residents?

Councillor Allen stated that the land which contained the Herringthorpe Playing Fields was acquired in 1928 as part of the Rotherham Corporation Act which sought to acquire land for the purposes of housing, roads, tramways and playing fields. It was covered by legislation which gave it that protection. Possible development of the site adjacent to the Playing Fields, known as Boswell Street/Arundel Road, was being explored and was in the very early stages. However, the Council was not proposing development on the Playing Fields, nor any change of designation.

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In her supplementary question, Councillor Yasseen stated that she was referring to the land that had been reclassified. In 2008 there was a campaign and Councillor Yasseen and others had since inherited the campaign to keep the land a green, recreational space. The group were referring to a piece of land that had always been used for leisure and was purchased in 1928. Mr Marston had been to previous meetings and had done much research into the topic. The piece of land was always known as Herringthorpe Playing Fields and money was granted from the Carnegie UK Trust and from Fields In Trust to purchase that land for the sole purpose of it being a green recreational space. In 2008, the Council planned to sell the land for private housing. The campaign and petition group stopped this from happening. An article from 2008 stated that there were legal restrictions on the land. Councillor Yasseen stated that instead of selling the land, the Council were now reclassifying it from a green space to a brown field space. This felt like the Council were trying to find a legal loophole to get around the wishes of the community.

Councillor Yasseen asked Councillor Allen if she would be willing to uphold the original agreement with those two trusts as agreed in 1928?

Councillor Allen reiterated that the potential development of Boswell Street/Arundel Road was in the very early stages. She confirmed that she had met with Mr Marston and others who had presented their understanding of the situation. The Council had taken internal legal advice and external counsel and the advice received was that there were no impediments to the Council developing the land at Boswell Street/Arundel Road. It was stressed that Herringthorpe Playing Fields would not be touched.

23. Councillor Yasseen: Despite significant resident backlash and complaints over unwanted, underused cycle lanes in Boston Castle, the council persists in expanding these costly schemes with no evidence of benefit—particularly in deprived areas that bear the disruption and negative impact while gaining no advantage. How does the council justify imposing these vanity projects rather than planning with communities?

Councillor Taylor stated that he believed the schemes had more benefits than Councillor Yasseen perceived them to have. Councillor Taylor reiterate that it was often in the poorest communities, with the worst air quality and resulting health consequences, and lowest car ownership, that the impact of improved public transport and active travel measures, including better conditions for walking, could have the most significant benefit. As an elected Member. Councillor Taylor did not understand why anyone would want to withhold those benefits from those communities.

In her supplementary Councillor Yasseen stated that there was not the evidence to back up those claims and the Councillor Taylor was wrong. The Council documents were very vague, and Councillor Yasseen had raised this at OSMB when looking at the Active Travel Strategy. The claims of a modal shift were a myth. There was no working with the communities about where cycle lanes would go. The consultation did not speak to cyclists. Councillor Yasseen stated that the Council needed to stop imposing infrastructure onto the most deprived communities without working with them. Councillor Yasseen asked if the Council would work with local communities to make cycle lanes that were needed and wanted, not the ones they had?

Councillor Taylor responded by saying that Councillor Yasseen was wrong. There were national studies in places where schemes were far more embedded than in Rotherham that showed this. It was not fair to judge Wellgate for example that had not up and running for 12 months. There was an extensive consultation process and the communities were being engaged with. The fact that residents were coming to meetings and asking questions showed that information was getting through. Councillor Taylor reiterated that nothing was being imposed. Councillor Taylor urged Councillor Yasseen and residents to get involved with the consultation and he confirmed he would send Councillor Yasseen the links to the studies.

24. Councillor Jones: On the lead up to Remembrance Sunday, our thoughts turn to those who lost their lives protecting our democracy and making sure their memory lives on. Can you please tell us how much the council receives to administer and display the Regimental museum of the Yorks and Lancs, and what is the plan for it moving forward?

Councillor Sheppard stated that the Council did not receive any funding towards the care or display of the Yorks and Lancs collections. Any displays, events or conservation work regarding this collection required grant funding. The Council's role as the sole trustee of collections was to maintain and manage those collections. There was no requirement to display the collections although the Council did so as it was an important part of Rotherham's history and heritage.

In his supplementary Councillor Jones stated that the Council had received over £200,000 two years ago in an Arts Council grant and that was the only way that Clifton Park got museum accreditation. Councillor Jones explained that the Yorks and Lancs regiment was a significant part of the armed forces with over 73,000 men serving in it. 10,000 were killed in action. Councillor Jones gave more details on the regiment and their role in protecting the country along with his personal connection to the Regiment. He was angry that the Regimental museum at Clifton Park was one room, a broom cupboard,

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with around 12 items in it. When Councillor Jones asked why, he was told by management that it no longer fit with the image the Council were trying to portray. Councillor Jones asked for an explanation as to why this was the case and if it should therefore be moved elsewhere?

Councillor Sheppard stated that it was disingenuous to say there was only 12 items when there were far more. The Council did not have an obligation as custodians of the collection to display it, but it did choose to do so as it was seen as important to residents and those who had served along with their families. It was confirmed that there was a grant two years ago, but grants had a lifespan. If further grants were to become available and if further exhibitions were mooted, Councillor Sheppard stated that the Council could display parts of the collection in other parts of the museum. Councillor Sheppard was proud that Rotherham's museum continued to display part of the collection and respect those who served.

25. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: On September 30th Aldwarke Lane was closed due to flooding near the new Parkgate link road, can you assure us that flood prevention is part of this scheme and what work is left to do?

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester agreed to receive a written response to his question.

26. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Given the Leader's answer regards the cost of any possible renewal of the Imagination Library, what were the benefits in your opinion of the scheme when operating?

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester agreed to receive a written response to his question.

27. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What is the estimated number of private households who will be using the replacement to Rothercare when the service changes next year?

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester agreed to receive a written response to his question.

28. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: The number of new changing places toilet facilities is welcome but what training is being given to staff at venues regards their operation, enabling access for users and maintenance?

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester agreed to receive a written response to his question.

29. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Please report on the measures taken since our last meeting to increase uptake of pension credit in the borough and any perceivable results?

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester agreed to receive a written response to his question.

30. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What would a £12m investment mean in terms of the number of footpaths we could bring up to standard in the borough?

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester agreed to receive a written response to his question.

31. Councillor Thorp: In the consultation for Rotherham East Network Improvements why is the priority given to cycle lanes instead of the Rotherham bound bus lane, on Fitzwilliam Rd and why does safer crossings only come with cycle lanes?

Councillor Taylor stated that he was not wholly clear as to the detail of the request, but if the suggestion is to provide a longer bus lane instead of one or both cycleways, that was certainly something Councillor Thorp could feed into the ongoing public consultation so that it could be considered in detail. In respect of why the proposal did not provide only crossings, this was because the previous Government have stipulated that the funding had to be used for transformational change, furthering the objectives of the national bus, cycling and walking strategies launched in 2021 and 2020 respectively.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Thorp stated that the strategies in no way suggested that cycling had to be prioritised. It was looking for systems to decarbonise by people taking the bus or walking or cycling. Councillor Thorp stated that the consultation grouped walking, pushing prams, crossing the road and cycling together. That would mean anyone ticking that box for walking is also ticking it for cycle lanes. There was no option to say no to cycle lanes. Councillor Thorp agreed with the Leader that there should be more buses and more bus lanes. He stated that it would be better to get rid of cycle lanes since many people cannot use them and replace them with bus lanes. Councillor Thorp asked why the Council kept pushing cycle lanes.

Councillor Taylor agreed to provide a written response.

32. This question was withdrawn.

33. Councillor Thorp: How is RMBC funding the new cycle lanes that are been forced on the people of Rotherham since they have to fund 15-20% themselves?

Councillor Taylor explained that the proposed interventions on Fitzwilliam Road and Broom Road were fully funded by the

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Department for Transport, with no specific local funding requirement for these measures on a 'project by project' basis as these were funded via a Programme of works, known as the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS).

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp stated that the CRSTS required the Council to contribute 15-20% to the scheme. He asked for an explanation.

Councillor Taylor agreed to provide a written response.

34. This question was withdrawn.

35. Councillor Thorp: How many strategic CIL applications have you received either internally from RMBC or externally from outside RMBC?

Councillor Taylor stated that there were seven internal applications and no external applications.

36. Councillor Tarmey: Residents in Woodsetts are disappointed by slow progress in starting construction for planned road safety improvements. Can the cabinet member confirm when work will begin?

Councillor Taylor confirmed that the project had a long lead in time owing for the need to co-ordinate some legal and governance processes with the adjacent Nottinghamshire County Council. It was anticipated that the scheme would be constructed during 2025.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tarmey asked if it would be early or late 2025.

Councillor Taylor could not confirm an exact date.

37. Councillor Tarmey: What is being done to handle the backlog of advisory white line markings to help prevent nuisance parking across the borough?

Councillor Taylor explained that the Council received a high volume of requests for white line markings across driveways which were offered free of charge. As such, these requests needed to be programmed in where possible around the larger funded projects. Any resulting backlog was reviewed on an annual basis and appropriate action undertaken to target long-outstanding requests and consider the available resources.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tarmey explained that the casework in North Anston had been dealt with brilliantly by officers and the white lines had been put in very quickly. However, a promise had been made for white lines in Woodsetts and this had not happened. Ward

Members did not feel that this had been handled well and asked Councillor Taylor to look into the matter.

Councillor Taylor agreed to raise the matter with officers. He also provided an update on the backlog. The current backlog stood at 10 H markings and 30 Advisory Disabled markings. It was anticipated that this backlog would be cleared over the coming weeks.

38. Councillor Tarmey: What is being done to ensure that electoral offences (for example, non-submission of spending returns) committed by candidates and agents are taken seriously by police in South Yorkshire?

Councillor Alam stated that the Returning Officer worked closely with a dedicated Single Point of Contact at South Yorkshire Police to ensure everything possible was put in place to protect the integrity of an election. Information was provided to all candidates and agents and Councillor Alam explained that, should anyone report allegations of electoral malpractice to the Returning Officer, they were forwarded on to the Police. It was a matter for the Police to determine what action was required for any reported allegations and the Council would provide any assistance required to support their investigation.

39. Councillor Tarmey: What is being done to ensure that threatening behaviour towards candidates in elections or elected Members is being taken seriously by police in South Yorkshire?

Councillor Alam explained that violence, threats and intimidation of anyone taking part in the democratic processes were totally unacceptable and should be zero tolerance. Recently introduced legislation had simplified and clarified the offence of undue influence and defined the types of illegal behaviour used to unfairly influence someone's vote. It was hoped that this should make it simpler for the Police to act when allegations of undue influence were reported. There was also now an extra sentencing option to strengthen the deterrent against intimidation of candidates and campaigns. The Returning Officer, Rotherham Council and South Yorkshire Police worked closely to share intelligence. Councillor Alam urged Members to report any such incidents to the Police.

40. Councillor Tarmey: Do you agree that the reduction in specialist dementia nurses (e.g. Admiral nurses) in Rotherham is a cause for concern?

As Councillor Baker-Rogers had left the meeting, Councillor Tarmey would receive a written response.

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41. Councillor Tarmey: Where emergency repairs to infrastructure (e.g. sewers) are necessary, do officers proactively assess, and attempt to manage the impact such work will have on traffic movements and other roadworks?

Councillor Taylor explained that officers worked with utility companies to plan and coordinate the delivery of service repairs on the adopted highway to minimise the disruption to our residents and visitors. When unplanned emergency repairs were needed the team worked with the service providers to determine the most efficient and effective way, including rigorous duration challenges where appropriate.

90. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.