

**THE CABINET
10th February, 2025**

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, Cusworth, Sheppard and Taylor.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Baker-Rogers.

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made:

Member	Agenda Item	Interest Type	Nature of Interest
Councillor Dave Sheppard	Agenda Item 119 - Business Rates Discretionary Relief Renewals In 2025/26	Nonpecuniary	Volunteer at the Arc Church Foodbank

113. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

114. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20 January 2025 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings and signed by the Chair.

115. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that Appendix 2 to Minute 120 (Housing Delivery Programme Report 2024-25) was exempt under Paragraph 3, Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1974. However, the meeting remained open to the public and press throughout.

116. SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) SUFFICIENCY UPDATE (SAFETY VALVE)

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update in respect of SEND Sufficiency following the previous update report to Cabinet in March 2024 and detailed annual High Needs / Safety Valve Programme updates to Audit committee in July 2024. The report also detailed the key activities undertaken in implementing the SEND Sufficiency programme focusing on the development of resource provision and delivery of the School's Accessibility Capital Funding Programme across both mainstream and special schools. An update was

also provided on plans to address sufficiency requirements across identified specialist provision as part of the Safety Valve programme. A timeline for consultation and development of a longer term SEND Sufficiency Strategy, which would coincide with the end of the Safety Valve programme in 2025/26, was laid out in the report.

The most recent phase of SEND Sufficiency aligned to Safety Valve was approved for implementation in June 2023. This phase aimed to support mainstream inclusion of SEND through the development of 10 resource provisions across mainstream settings creating 100 new SEND places. A second aim was the implementation of the schools Accessibility Funding Framework across both mainstream and special schools. The aim of the Schools Accessibility Funding was to increase inclusivity in existing schools in Rotherham by encouraging schools to create/ maintain SEN placements with capital improvements.

Further reports to Cabinet in July 2024 and December 2024 had given approval for additional increases in places as part of the continued development of Elements Academy since its opening in September 2023. Approval was also granted for capital investment to address sufficiency challenges at Newman School as part of the academisation with TEAM Multi-Academy Trust.

Following due diligence, capital development and Department for Education approval, 5 new resource provisions had opened, and 3 existing provisions had agreed an increase in places (creating 90 school places in 8 out of the 10 planned new provisions). The newly established resource provision placed along with incremental growth of provision created in previous phases of sufficiency had led to 140 young people currently accessing resource provision across Rotherham as of November 2024. This was an increase of 100 placements since the commencement of Safety Valve. Additional places created through the new provisions would continue to grow throughout the academic year 24/25 and 25/26.

The Accessibility Small Grant Capital Programme had been fully implemented with five funding rounds. As of November 2024, 28 mainstream schools had been successful in receiving grant funding. Successful projects had been diverse and wide reaching, working closely with schools to identify capital projects to support schools to meet a wider level of need linked to known existing pupils and those who may attend the school in the future. Examples of successful projects were set out in paragraph 2.9 of the report.

During the meeting the demand for additional places and provision both nationally and locally was discussed. Members and officers noted that it was not a situation that the Council could build itself out of. Following the General Election it had been noted that the Department for Education was now more supportive of keeping children in mainstream schools which was positive. However more work was needed to ensure the curriculum was inclusive.

Resolved:

That Cabinet note the activity undertaken and progress to date on the latest rounds of SEND Sufficiency in line with the commitments within the Safety Valve Agreement.

117. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES & ALTERNATIVE PROVISION (SENDAP) STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the results of the public consultation on the proposed SENDAP Strategy. The new SENDAP Strategy (Appendix 1) recognised the importance of Alternative Provision in delivering good outcomes for children and young people. Alternative provision was essential to meet the needs of children and young people who could not attend mainstream schools due to exclusion, illness, or other reasons. It included education arranged by local authorities or schools to ensure that these students continued to receive suitable education. Alternative Provision could also involve directing students to off-site programs to improve their behaviour or meet their specific need.

Nationally, the White Paper on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan published in March 2023 had identified the key pressures on the SEND System nationally. This had been confirmed by the more recent National Audit Office report in October 2024. These papers consistently found that the SEND system was dealing with a level of volume for which it was not designed with insufficient resources. Across the Country, this had resulted in a loss of parental confidence, poor outcomes for children and young people and large amounts of debt. Local government had been given the responsibility to commission and shape local provision yet lacked the powers to develop and change systems. The Rotherham Joint Local Area SEND inspection in July 2021, led by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), while identifying some strengths, required the local area to produce a written statement of action prioritising the following four areas for action:

- Quality of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Communication of Local Offer
- Preparation for Adulthood
- Graduated Response

The Rotherham SEND system was re-inspected by Ofsted and the CQC in October 2024. The Area SEND Inspection of the Local Area Partnership placed it among the highest performing areas nationally and recognised the very significant work undertaken by the Council in its widest sense, the Integrated Care Board, health provider partners and schools to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Rotherham. However, significant national and local challenges remained

and where there was a need for further development within Rotherham, the local area partnership was judged as taking appropriate actions.

Co-production workshops and engagement with young people had highlighted the need for the new Rotherham SENDAP Strategy to be written in a format that enabled the children and young people to see how it would impact their lives. This was reflected in the language used in the 7 outcome statements as set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report.

Paragraph 2.10 of the report detailed the five commitments which had been identified as priority areas of development and monitoring, two of which were also highlighted in the recent Area Send Inspection.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approve the refreshed Rotherham SENDAP Strategy 2025 to 2030 (Appendix 1) that has been co-produced with partners across the Borough.

118. DECEMBER 2024/25 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which was the fifth financial monitoring report for the 2024/25 financial year. As at December 2024, the Council currently estimated an overspend of £3.1m for the financial year 2024/25. This was largely due to demand led pressures on children's residential placements, adults social care packages, home to school transport and the impact of the Local Government Pay Award. In addition, the Council was still impacted by the inflationary pressures in the economy. Even though inflation had fallen to 2.5%, the Council's base costs had significantly increased across the recent high inflation period by well in excess of 20%.

Whilst the Directorate overspend, which stood at £15.2m was concerning, it had reduced from a peak of £17.2m. As a result of these cost pressures the Council had been working on budget recovery plans to reduce the overspend in year and minimise the year end requirement for reserves. In addition, elements of this overspend were forecast with two key Budget contingencies created as part of setting the Council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2024/25. The Council set a Social Care Contingency of £3.4m and a Corporate Budget Provision of £3.5m to support anticipated pressures across Social Care and Home to School Transport, whilst detailed review work of these services was undertaken, and operational improvements are delivered to reduce cost pressures and create cost avoidance.

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy continued to perform well with the Council's approach to borrowing adapted to minimise the level of borrowing and borrow short term, to ultimately minimise interest costs. It was estimated that this should see the Council generate savings of at least £5.1m for 2024/25, though again market conditions were out of the

Council's control.

It was noted that the Capital Programme Update could be found on pages 134 to 139 of the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £3.1m.
2. Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2024/25 financial position.
3. Note the updated position of the Capital Programme.

119. BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RELIEF RENEWALS IN 2025/26

Consideration was given to the report which detailed the renewal applications for the awards of Discretionary Business Rate Relief for the organisations and premises listed in Appendix 1. This was in accordance with the Council's Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy which had been approved by Cabinet in December 2016.

Central Government and councils share every £1 of rates due as follows:

Central Government	50%
South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority	1%
Rotherham MBC	49%

The total costs of granting the relief for the financial year was:

Year	Total Amount of Relief	Cost to RMBC
2025/26	£ 940,928.66	£461,055.04

The recommendation was to approve the award of Discretionary Business Rate Relief for the organisations listed in Appendix 1. However, any award had to comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 before it was applied to the Business Rates Relief account. The Council would therefore undertake an assessment of each of the approved applications before 31 March 2025 in order to ensure that they met the requirements of the act.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approve the applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for the organisations listed in Appendix 1 of this report and in

accordance with the details set out in Section 6 to this report, for the 2025/26 financial year.

Councillor Sheppard declared a nonpecuniary interest in this item as he volunteered at the Arc Church foodbank which received rate relief.

120. HOUSING DELIVERY PROGRAMME REPORT 2024-25 – UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report which was the latest six-monthly update to Cabinet on the latest developments and future plans for the Council's Housing Delivery Programme. There were over 7,000 households on the Council's housing register. The Council's ability to meet this demand continued to be eroded by the Right to Buy, which had seen 1,041 Council homes sold between January 2018 and November 2024. As such, there was a clear and continuing need for more affordable homes across the Borough, an issue further exacerbated by the current cost-of-living crisis. The Council continued to address this need through delivery of the Housing Delivery Programme, with a target to deliver hundreds of new homes between January 2018 and March 2026.

The programme combined development on Council owned land and the acquisition of new and existing homes. Through the Housing Delivery Programme, which started in 2018, the Council expected to deliver 1,000 new Council homes across the Borough by Summer 2027. The Council had been very successful in using its land and resources to build and acquire new Council homes and was making significant progress on the delivery target, notably reaching the 600th Council home milestone in September 2024. Overall, from 1 January 2018 to 30 November 2024, the Council had successfully delivered 630 new Council homes consisting of 495 homes for rent and 135 homes for shared ownership. In addition, the Council had also built 125 new homes for market sale. An updated photographic summary of delivery along with a selection of quotes from tenants was provided at Appendix 3.

34 properties had been acquired since December 2023 and the latest position on these was included at exempt Appendix 2. In addition to the 34 acquired properties, sales were agreed on a further 40 properties. Whilst there was a risk that a small number of these might not progress to legal completion, it was anticipated that the majority would legally complete during the financial year 2024/25. The forecast costs for these 40 properties was lower than the estimated costs and so it was anticipated that more than 100 homes would be acquired within the original budget of £18m. Cabinet was therefore asked to approve a change in the programme target to 'a minimum of 100 homes' rather than 'a maximum of 100 homes', as long as the overall budget provision was not exceeded.

The Council had continued to review its approach to procurement to respond to changes in market conditions and maximise what could be delivered in the current programme timeframe. Based on feedback from

extensive market engagement (undertaken in the first half of 2024), and in response to a volatile and uncertain construction sector, the majority of the remaining new build schemes on Council owned sites were to be procured on a two-stage design and build basis. This would allow the Council to review scheme costs before entering into construction contracts, whilst working with contractors to develop the best design solutions to maximise value for money on what were typically constrained brownfield sites. Any sites which were forecast to deliver more than ten homes required separate Cabinet approval (with early forecasts based on indicative site capacity layouts). Several sites had been presented to Cabinet over recent years which had forecast to deliver over ten homes. However, it was not until early design work had been completed and a scheme had been granted planning permission that the number of homes to be delivered on a site was more certain. There was a need for increased flexibility during the 'design stage' to allow appointed contractors to optimise scheme designs and progress schemes more efficiently in to the 'build stage' without undue delay which could contribute to increased costs. Cabinet was therefore asked to approve a change to the requirement for separate Cabinet approval on individual sites from 'more than ten homes' to 'more than fifteen homes'.

During the meeting it was noted how important the Housing Delivery Programme was for the people of Rotherham and how it was making and would continue to make a huge difference to resident's lives.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the significant progress made since 2018 through the implementation of the Housing Delivery Programme, including the completion of the 600th new Council home in September 2024.
2. Approve the purchase of homes from any of the schemes identified in Exempt Appendix 2.
3. Note that authority to purchase homes in line with the Housing Acquisitions Policy was delegated to the Assistant Director for Housing following Cabinet approval on 16 October 2023.
4. Approve an increase to the number of new homes the Council has authority to purchase under the Housing Acquisitions Policy (utilising the delegations referred to in Recommendation 3) from 'up to 100 homes' to 'a minimum of 100 homes and not exceeding the approved budget'.
5. Approve the proposal to change the requirement for separate Cabinet approval for individual Council housing development sites from 'more than ten homes' to 'more than fifteen homes'.

6. Agree to continue to receive an update on the housing development programme every six months.

121. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX REPORT 2025-26

Consideration was given to the report submitted which proposed the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2025/26, based on the Council's Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26, budget consultation and the consideration of Directorate budget proposals. A review of the financial planning assumptions within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been undertaken.

The proposed Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy reflected the Council's priorities as set out in the Council Plan 2022-2025 and Year Ahead Delivery Plan. The development of the Budget proposals for 2025/26 and the further update of the MTFS took into account prevailing economic factors, supplier market factors, demand and complexity of care pressures, and the lasting impact of periods of high inflation during 2023/24. Following the Council's technical MTFS updates, proposed budget decisions within this report and the impact of the Provisional Financial Settlement, the Council had been able to propose a balanced budget for 2025/26 and 2026/27 with a potential £3.2m funding gap in 2027/28.

In setting the proposed 2025/26 budget, Cabinet were asked to recommend to Council a 3% increase in Council Tax, made up of an increase of 1% in the Council's basic Council Tax plus an increase of 2% for the Adult Social Care precept. The Budget also proposed a further year of a Local Council Tax Support Top-up Scheme to operate across 2025/26 to provide further support to low income working age households in the Borough to assist them in managing the impacts of the cost of living crisis and support the most financially vulnerable households.

In introducing the report, the Leader stated that the context for setting the budget had changed for the better since the General Election in July 2024. The Autumn Statement and Policy update, along with the Provisional Financial Settlement, had given the Local Authority sector a much needed boost in terms of the funding package available. The confirmation of £1.3bn additional grant for the sector was much needed, with £0.68bn towards Adult Social Care (£3.8m for RMBC) and £0.7bn to be provided through the new Recovery Grant allocated on a deprivation basis (meaning £8.7m of new un-ringfenced grant for RMBC). Whilst some smaller grants had been removed to support this £1.3bn national uplift, overall the funding package represented a substantial increase in Local Authority funding. The settlement represented the most significant increase in core funding in the last 15 years and the Council would be around £14m better off in 2025/26 than was expected a year ago.

It was noted that, although the position for Local Authority Funding had shifted positively, the Council remained committed to increasing efficiency

and delivering on the priorities of residents. As such, in order to invest in key priorities, this Budget included Budget savings proposals of £2.6m aimed at increasing the efficiency of service delivery and reducing or removing spending on services that were no longer required or could be delivered differently. For example, through maximising grant funding opportunities in Children's Services or route optimisation within Waste Management.

In recognition of escalating cost pressures within Adult Social Care, relating to increased complexity of care and rising demand for the service, market inflation and transitions, the Council would provide for approximately £17m of additional funding to support the delivery of Adult Social Care services. Further investment of £4.3m would also be provided to address unavoidable cost pressures in complying with Home to School Transport requirements and £1.5m for unavoidable Waste Management costs. In addition, the Budget would provide some additional investments to help support people and to support with delivering on the Council's ambitions for the Borough with specific regard to the Council Plan aims.

In concluding, the Leader thanked all those involved in the production of the budget.

Councillor Alam stated that this was a responsible and prudent budget on which the public and partners had been consulted. The results of this consultation were attached at Appendix 5. Councillor Alam referenced the investment proposal that would establish the Street Safe Team to improve feelings of safety in town and village centres (paragraph 2.7.4). In order to encourage more visitors into the town centre, the first hour of parking would be free at Drummond Street, Wellgate North, Wellgate Multi Storey, Douglas Street, Unity Place, Westgate, Clifton Hall, Forge Island and Scala (Monday to Friday inclusive.) The Council was also proposing to invest an additional £100k to improve road markings on the classified road network and in estates as detailed in paragraph 2.7.15 of the report. Councillor Alam also thanked everyone involved in the budget setting process for their input.

Councillor Taylor expressed his support for the positive budget. He also referend the improvement to road markings. The proposed additional investment would allow the service to become proactive in identifying and addressing these issues through creation of an annual programme of road markings to be refreshed, which would be published and communicated to Councillors and the public. The Employment Solutions Team would have its funding arrangements mainstreamed which would enable a stable programme of support for residents looking to get into or stay in work.

Councillor Sheppard thanked all involved for their hard work on producing the budget. He referenced the investments relating to the "A Cleaner, Greener Local Environment" theme which included proposals to invest £375k in providing modern, efficient and effective plant equipment to

undertake grounds maintenance and street cleansing across the borough. It was also proposed to invest £60k per year in establishing a green spaces general maintenance and repair budget. The overflow parking at Clifton Park would be improved and prices on leisure activities at Rother Valley and Thrybergh Country Parks would be frozen. Following the flooding from Storm Babet in 2023, it was proposed to invest £6m in the Catcliffe Village (River Rother) Flood Alleviation Scheme. Councillor Sheppard also referenced the additional support for residents with school uniform costs (paragraph 2.7.19) and the extension of the additional temporary resource for which assisted residents to complete the application process for Pension Credit (paragraph 2.7.20). It was also proposed that enquires take place regarding the expansion of the Food Works offer from Sheffield to Rotherham (paragraph 2.7.21).

Councillor Cusworth explained that, building on the existing programme, the Council would deliver a further investment of £378k as match funding into the in-house residential programme to provide additional complex needs provision for children. This built on the previous phases of development which had seen five children's homes open with a current in house of capacity of 11 beds. Councillor Cusworth also noted that the investment throughout the budget would have a positive impact on families and children across the borough.

This report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process and the Board fully supported the recommendations. The main points of discussion centred on:

- The persistent overspend in Children and Young People's Services (although it was noted that a number of contributing factors were outside of the Council's control).
- The conclusion of the Pause programme and provision of support to service users following the conclusion.
- The number of children in care in Rotherham (which was decreasing due to works being undertaken.)
- The savings proposal for Waste Service Route Optimisation.
- The investment proposal for the Street Safe Team.
- The investment proposal within the Employment Solutions Team.
- The hiring of vehicles for the investment proposal relating to Street Cleansing and Fly Tipping Improvements.
- The funding model for the Food Works programme.
- Investment in Customer Services.
- Investment in the Capital Programme.

Full details on the discussion of the budget at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting held on 5 February 2025 can be found in the minutes of that meeting. A number of additional recommendations were presented by OSMB and Cabinet agreed to accept those recommendations.

Councillor Steele wished to place on record his thanks to the Scrutiny Officers for their help in facilitating the scrutiny on the budget.

The Budget and Council Tax Report would be presented for approval at the Council meeting on Wednesday 5 March 2025.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommend to Council:

1. Approval of the Budget and Financial Strategy for 2025/26 as set out in the report and appendices, including a basic Council Tax increase of 1% and an Adult Social Care precept of 2%.
2. Approval of the extension to the Local Council Tax Support Top Up scheme, that will provide up to £126.12 of additional support to low income households accessing the Council's Council Tax Support scheme. It will support the most financially vulnerable to rising household costs, through reduced Council Tax bills as described in Section 2.5.15.
3. Approve the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme as set out at 2.5.10 and proposed changes to Council Tax Premiums as set out in Section 2.5.19.
4. Approval of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2027/28, as described within Section 2.6.
5. Approval of the Reserves Strategy as set out in Section 2.8 noting that the final determination of Reserves will be approved as part of reporting the financial outturn for 2024/25.
6. To note and accept the comments and advice of the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer), provided in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as to the robustness of the estimates included in the Budget and the adequacy of reserves for which the Budget provides as set out in Section 2.14.
7. To note the feedback from the public and partners following the public consultation on the Council's budget for 2025/26 which took place from 18 November 2024 to 10 January 2025, attached as Appendix 5.
8. Approval of the proposed increases in Adult Social Care provider contracts and for Personal Assistants as set out in Section 2.4.
9. Approval of the proposed approach and increases in Childrens Social Care costs as set out in Section 2.4.25.

10. Approval of the revenue investment proposals set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 2.
11. Approval of the proposed revenue savings set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 4.
12. Approval of the Council Fees and Charges for 2025/26 attached as Appendix 7.
13. Application of the Business Rates Reliefs as set out in Section 2.10, in line with Government guidance.
14. Approval of the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme as presented in Section 2.12 and Appendices 3A to 3F.
15. Approval of the Treasury Management matters for 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 9 of this report including the Prudential Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy.
16. Approval that any changes resulting from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2025/26 be reflected in the Budget and Council Tax Report to Council on 5th March.
17. Continuation of the principles and measures adopted since April 2020 to make faster payments to suppliers on receipt of goods, works and services following a fully reconciled invoice as described in Section 2.11.
18. Approval of the Budget allocations for the Community Leadership Fund as set out in Section 2.9.
19. Approval that the Capital Programme Budget continues to be managed in line with the following key principles:
 - i. Any underspends on the existing approved Capital Programme in respect of 2024/25 be rolled forward into future years, subject to an individual review of each carry forward to be set out within the Financial Outturn 2024/25 report to Cabinet.
 - ii. In line with Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules 7.7 to 7.11 and 8.12, any successful grant applications in respect of capital projects will be added to the Council's approved Capital Programme on an ongoing basis.
 - iii. Capitalisation opportunities and capital receipts flexibilities will be maximised, with capital receipts earmarked to minimise revenue costs.

That Cabinet accept the additional recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

1. That an update on progress following the implementation of Waste Service Route Optimisation programme be brought back to OSMB within twelve months.
2. That an update on the progress following the implementation of the Street Safe Team programme be brought back to OSMB within twelve months.
3. That a report be provided to OSMB within three months detailing the performance information for the Employment Solutions Team.
4. That the Leader liaises with officers regarding the 'Free Courses for Jobs' DfE funding allocated to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to consider if this could be utilised for the Employment Solutions Team and feeds back to OSMB.
5. That information be provided to the Chair of OSMB regarding the method of funding for Food Works in Sheffield.
6. That Democratic Services arrange a meeting with Councillors, Steele, Bacon, Blackham, Marshall, and Baggaley along with officers to consider the most appropriate manner to monitor the Capital Programme going forward.

122. STRATEGIC COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the application process for Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (Strategic CIL) funding which had taken place following Cabinet approval in July 2024. The report also set out the findings of the Strategic CIL officer group assessment on submitted projects against relevant criteria to determine the infrastructure that would most support new growth areas and help bring forward development sites to implement the Local Plan.

The Council had a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in place for Rotherham which secured contributions from developers towards infrastructure to support growth. CIL payments were required alongside planning permission for certain types of development and worked in tandem with payments negotiated as "Section 106" planning obligations. As of January 2025, the Council held approximately £9.2m in the Strategic CIL fund. The allocation of Strategic CIL funds was a Cabinet decision and funding applications were invited on an annual basis. The overall fund did not need to be used in any one year, it could be rolled forward fully or in part to accumulate with future CIL payments.

In August 2024 a Strategic CIL application pack was sent to over 100 infrastructure contacts responsible for the different types of infrastructure that were reflected in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule that supported the Local Plan. These types of infrastructure included water, flood risk, broadband & telecommunications, energy, green infrastructure/environment, transport, health, emergency services, cultural & community facilities, education, libraries, and waste. The providers of these different types of infrastructure included external organisations and internal Council services.

Twelve applications were received for Strategic CIL funding through this application round. Seven applications were submitted by the Council's services and five applications by the NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. The NHS bids were all for similar schemes to improve local primary care facilities at locations around the Borough affected by growth, so were combined into one bid for assessment. This resulted in eight applications in total being assessed using the criteria approved by Cabinet. Details on the CIL eligibility criteria were set out in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.4 of the report.

Applicants were sent a CIL scoring matrix alongside the application form for transparency and clarity. A Strategic CIL officer panel applied the scoring matrix to the eight applications that were submitted. The Panel had carefully considered whether the projects met the important 'Gateway Tests', as set out in paragraph 2.6 of the report, that formed part of the application process. These tests reflected the fundamental role and purpose of Strategic CIL funding, in supporting the delivery of growth as planned for through the Rotherham Local Plan and forming part of the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule.

Out of the eight applications assessed, four potential projects fulfilled the requirements of the Gateway Tests:

- Medical Centre Improvements
- A633 Rotherham to Dearne Valley Bus Priority
- Trans Pennine Trail Community Access
- Rotherham East Sustainable Transport Corridor Extension

Further details on these projects, including information on costs, dates, proposed works, deliverability, funding and benefits. were set out in paragraph 2.8 of the report and at Appendix 1.

Since the submission of CIL bids, the Department of Transport had announced it would develop a new Integrated National Transport Strategy, and it was anticipated a new round of funding would be announced for transport schemes following the Comprehensive Spending Review in late spring 2025. This could allow for transport schemes submitted to CIL to be delivered through external funding. As such, it was not proposed to commit any CIL funding to transport at this time.

The total cost of the eligible projects was £11,737,294. As this exceeded the current Strategic CIL funds and the uncertainty of external funding to transport schemes, preferred options were set out in Section 3 of the report with the remaining project(s) to be considered for future funding rounds.

The Medical Centres Improvements project and Trans Pennine Trail Community Access project were recommended for support. The A633 Rotherham to Dearne Valley Bus Priority project and Rotherham East Sustainable Transport Corridor Extension project were recommended for consideration in future rounds. Paragraph 2.13 of the report detailed the ineligible projects.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approve the allocation of Strategic CIL funds to the following project(s):
 - Medical Centres Improvements
 - Trans Pennine Trail Community Access
2. That Cabinet approves delegation to the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, to establish the process to release funding to the approved project(s) as set out in Section 5 of the report.

123. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the Council's Climate Change activity for the previous year. A full progress report for 2024/25 and an action plan for 2025/26 were appended to the report. Key progress was highlighted in the report with respect to the specific themes of:

- Monitoring and measurement
- Energy decarbonisation
- Transport
- Housing
- Waste
- Built & Natural Environment
- Influence & Engagement (including culture and heritage)
- Adaptation

Nature Recovery was included within the Built & Natural Environment theme to align with existing work streams around tree planting and woodland management.

2025 was highlighted as a key milestone in the Council's original climate

declaration, marking five years since Cabinet approved its net zero targets. As such 2025 presented an opportunity to review progress made, consider the challenges experienced and the socioeconomic and political changes observed during this time. It was also an opportunity to reflect on a refined view of the Council's carbon footprint following work to improve this dataset and to consider how these impacted upon the Council's ability to reach its targets. It was therefore proposed that a review be carried out and an assessment of the recommended approach to the next five years be undertaken. It was also an opportunity, as the Council moved into the final 5 years to improve governance around this programme to enable more focussed progress.

Resolved:

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

124. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

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

125. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

The next meeting of the Cabinet would be held on Monday 17 March 2025, commencing at 10.00am, in Rotherham Town Hall.