

Council Plan 2025

Consultation Report January 2025

Council Plan 2025 Consultation Report

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Photo from the Hellaby Depot staff consultation session

1. Background and Methodology

The new Council Plan will set out the strategic aims for Rotherham Council from 2025 onwards, providing a foundation on which all council activities are based. To help inform this, a public consultation and engagement exercise took place from 6 September to 12 November 2024 to seek the views of Rotherham residents and other local stakeholders.

Participation in the Council Plan consultation overall has been positive with a total combination of 1,963 interactions, survey responses or focus group attendees across all methods of engagement. This is an increase on the 1,300 engagements achieved through the consultation exercise undertaken in 2021 for the current Council Plan.

The consultation was conducted in a semi-structured manner, there were three set questions that mainly formed the parameters for discussion. The focus centred around what people thought were the biggest challenges and opportunities facing our communities. The following methodologies were used to capture a broad range of views:

- **Focus Groups** – Seven focus groups took place. Externally these were with children and young people, voluntary and community sector organisations (supported by Voluntary Action Rotherham), and Parish Councils. Internally these were held with senior managers, Council staff and Members. 210 people took part in total.
- **Short Interactions** – Three questions were discussed with groups both virtually and in person with triangular consultation towers and people writing on sticky notes to answer the questions:
 1. What do you most like about where you live?
 2. What is one thing you would improve about your area?
 3. What is your one wish for the future of Rotherham?

There were 1,027 short interaction responses across all questions (not including the Rotherham Show). Staff from the Policy, Performance and Intelligence service attended the short interaction sessions, supported by colleagues from the Organisational Development and Change Team.

- **Online and Postal Survey** – An online survey was hosted on the Council website that went 'live' on 6 September and closed on 31 October. A postal survey ran concurrent to this which included a paper version of the online survey questions sent out to 500 randomly selected households across the borough with a freepost envelope included. There were 214 online respondents in total, and 41 postal survey responses were received, which is an 8% return rate and above the national average for postal survey responses (typically between 3%-4%).
- **Rotherham Show** – The 'tower' and questions from the short interactions were used to consult with the public over the two days of the show, staffed jointly by the Policy, Performance and Intelligence service and the Neighbourhoods Team in the Assistant Chief Executive's directorate. There were 472 responses across the three questions.

This consultation is seen as part of an ongoing dialogue between the Council and residents. Feedback and the results of the consultation will be provided to members of the public, once the new Council Plan has been published.

2. Engagement Profile

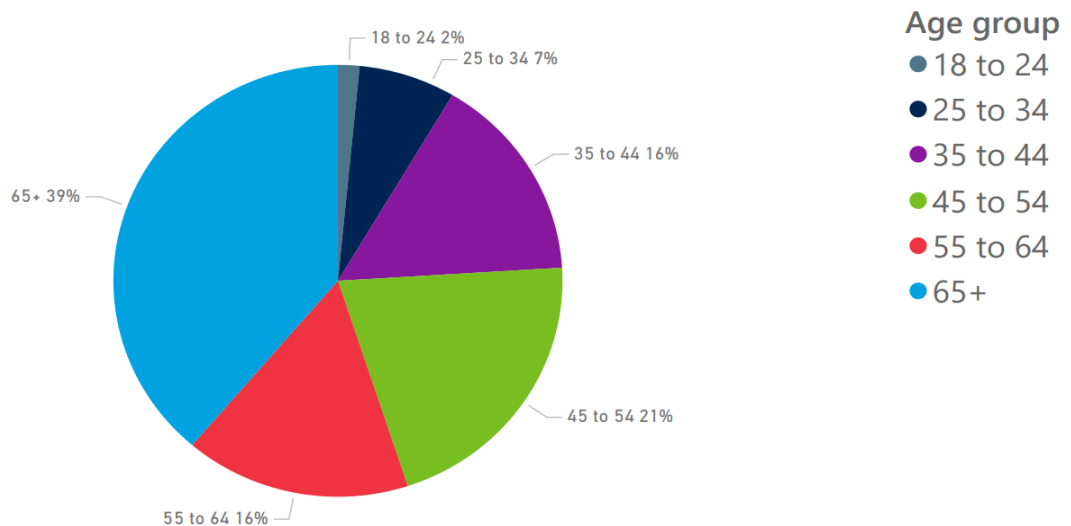
The following section provides an analysis of the equalities monitoring questions contained within the online and postal surveys (where a response was provided). In total, 255 responses to the postal and online surveys were received (214 online and 41 postal surveys). Just over 50% of respondents stated that they were happy to provide additional information about themselves.

Gender

More responses were received from women than men, with women making up 59% of the respondents, compared to 41% male respondents.

Age profile

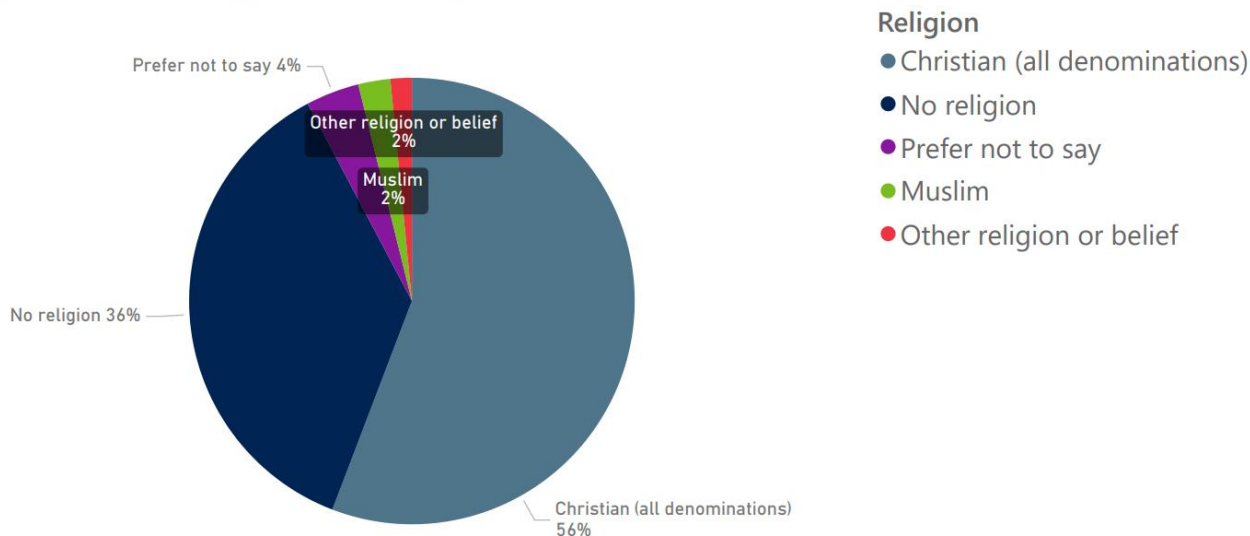
Age profile of online and postal survey respondents



In comparison to the age profile of the borough, survey respondents were older – 39% were aged 65 or over, compared to 20% borough-wide and only 2% of survey respondents were aged 24 or under, compared with a borough figure of 29%. There was a good representation of the middle age groups (25-44 year olds), while 45-54 year olds were overrepresented, with 21% respondents from that age bracket, as compared to a Rotherham figure of 12%.

Religion

Religion of online and postal survey respondents



In comparison to the religious profile of the borough, more survey respondents identified as Christian (56% of survey respondents, compared to 49% borough-wide) and 36% stated no religion (compared to 40% borough-wide). 2% of respondents identified as Muslim, compared to the borough-wide figure of 5% and 2% stated 'other religion'.

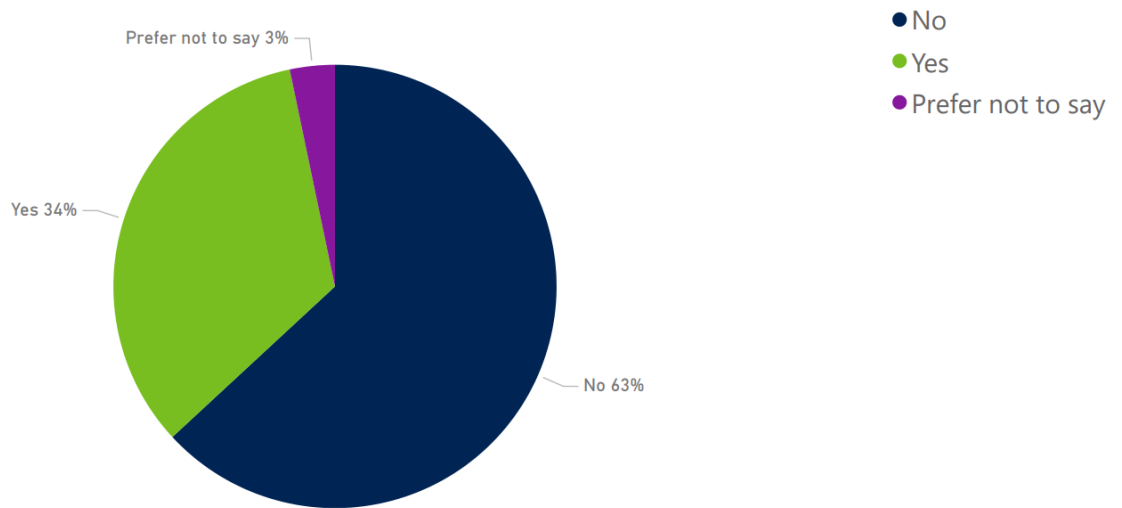
Ethnicity

95.4% of online and postal respondents identified as White British and 4.6% identified as an ethnic minority group. This included 2.3% Asian or Asian British, 0.8% Black or Black British, 0.8% White – Western European and 0.8% White – Other. To put this into context, in the 2021 Census, 88.3% of Rotherham residents identified as White British and 11.7% identified as ethnic minority groups.

Disability

Respondents were asked if they had a disability or condition that had lasted or was expected to last at least twelve months.

Disability - online and postal survey respondents



Of those who provided a response, 34% stated that they have a disability. This is higher than the 21% of Rotherham residents who reported a long-term illness or disability in the 2021 Census. In addition, 19% of respondents stated that they were carers.

Sexual orientation

96% of respondents identified as heterosexual, which is slightly higher than the overall borough figure (92%), meaning that other sexual orientations were under-represented (1% bisexual, gay or lesbian, 1% other, 2% prefer not to say).

3. Findings from the Consultation and Engagement Methods

Focus Groups

The consultation included seven focus groups (internal and external). Each one was structured in a similar format, with some bespoke elements designed to suit the nature of each group and the amount of time allocated to the session. The focus groups were held on the following dates:

- RMBC wider leadership team - 1 October 2024 (56 attendees)
- Regeneration and environment manager forum - 16 October 2024 (35 attendees)
- Parish Council network meeting – 17 October 2024 (10 attendees)
- Children and Young People’s Partnership board – 22 October 2024 (a total of 33 attendees including 17 adults and 16 young people). An additional discussion took place with Young inspectors at their meeting on 7 October with 14 attendees – see appendix 3
- RMBC staff session – 5 November 2024 (20 attendees)
- Voluntary and Community sector session facilitated by Voluntary Action Rotherham – 6 November 2024 (20 attendees)
- RMBC Elected Member session – 12 November 2024 (22 attendees).

Focus groups were composed of stakeholders including partners, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, RMBC staff, children and young people, and members of the public. There was a total of 210 participants across all seven focus groups.

Focus group discussions used a semi-structured format. The sessions were mostly facilitated by members of the Policy, Improvement and Risk team who were tasked with asking the questions and ensuring that the sessions remained focussed and relevant, whilst also allowing participants to independently hold discussions based on their own perspectives. The team started with a ‘scene setting’ presentation that provided a background to the current Council Plan, its achievements, challenges, opportunities, and the approach to consulting on the new plan for 2025. This was followed by an ‘icebreaker’ type question, where participants were asked to imagine what Rotherham will be like as a place to live in 2030. Then, where possible, focus group attendees broke up into smaller groups where they were tasked with considering the following questions:

- What do you think of the current Council Plan themes – do they look right or is there anything else the Council needs to focus on?
- What three things are most important to you? And what can the Council do to help respond to these?
- Creating a better borough needs everyone’s support. What can you do to help?

Most sessions included a general discussion (which was useful in sharing ideas and putting forward views) followed by group feedback. The sessions concluded by asking participants how they would like to be kept informed on Council Plan developments/progress in the future.

Individual focus group findings

Focus Group 1: RMBC wider leadership team session - 1 October 2024

This internal focus group discussion was framed around the challenges and opportunities under each of the existing Council Plan themes.

Under the **‘every neighbourhood thriving’** theme, the following challenges were identified:

- The need to change the ‘contract’ between service providers and communities, ensuring an understanding of what the Council can do and what the public can do. This point was linked to strength-based approaches and the distinction between statutory and non-statutory (other support) activity i.e. recognising how and when ‘the state’ can and should intervene or provide a service, versus facilitating or helping to create an environment/culture/ecosystem in which people and places can or are more likely to thrive. Part of the council’s role should be to ensure this is inclusive and to target scarce resources effectively, using evidence and insight, and involving the right stakeholders from the outset.
- The need to target help where it is most needed, suggestions included a focus on prevention and early intervention, providing assisted support when needed, tackling unemployment through the Pathways to Work programme, and a greater focus on preventing homelessness and rough sleeping.

The following opportunities were identified:

- The potential for increased community engagement with a supportive community, via neighbourliness and connectivity – to enable communities to be self-supporting and self-serve (potentially via enhanced digital solutions)
- Utilising a network of community inspired volunteers (both formal and informal) and enhancing links with parish councils
- Development of community-based multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) – with a mix of health and care professionals
- Joint commissioning (in particular) with VCS organisations – although funding risks to some VCS led projects were highlighted as a challenge.

Under the **‘people are safe, healthy and live well’** theme, the following challenges were identified:

- The cost-of-living impact on homelessness, mental health and drug and alcohol services – need to respond through place-based working and social prescribing
- Health inequalities – worklessness and long-term illness and the link between the two. A need to focus on systematic change through the Pathways to Work programme and apprenticeships to create higher standards of living and reduce deprivation.

The following opportunities were identified:

- Improving access to culture and sporting facilities/activities, bearing in mind the associated benefits they provide for health etc
- Strong partnership arrangements – links to Children’s Capital of Culture and Sports England funding
- Place-based working and social prescribing.

Under the **‘every child able to fulfil their potential’** theme, the following challenges were identified:

- Rising child poverty and inequalities
- Creating opportunities for transitions into adulthood and building aspirations
- Prevention and early intervention.

The following opportunities were identified:

- Lots of projects such as Grimm and Co, Skills Street, Children's Capital of Culture, and work with schools to engage with children and young people
- Family hubs and parenting support.

Under the '**expanding economic opportunities**' theme, the following challenges were identified:

- The need to create more jobs and deliver jobs at the right scale, including reducing the widening gaps in earnings. Static picture on total number of jobs and historic reliance on job creation across South Yorkshire
- In the context of an 'inclusive economy', how do we define excluded groups and take action?
- Raising aspirations across communities
- Making Rotherham an attractive place for businesses.

The following opportunities were identified:

- Employment Solutions and Pathways to Work
- The regeneration of the whole borough and engagement with communities, not just in the town centre
- Social value

Under the '**cleaner, greener local environment**' theme, the following challenges were identified:

- Implementing climate change adaptations and responding to the impacts of adverse weather conditions, helping communities to become more resilient
- Preparing projects for funding opportunities – including being 'shovel ready' for major infrastructure delivery
- Improving flood defences
- Limited funding to deliver on ambitions.

The following opportunities were identified:

- A wealth of green spaces and improving facilities (the country parks, Clifton Park's watersplash) to attract new customers and increase investment
- Environment and how this can help to develop communities and regeneration programmes
- Enhancing community pride in the environment – potentially through better green spaces, sustainable travel options etc
- Renewable energy project
- Biophilic environment – new green spaces strategy.

Focus Group 2: Regeneration and Environment Manager Forum - 16 October 2024

This internal staff focus group took place virtually over Microsoft Teams with managers from the Regeneration and Environment directorate of the Council. The Council Plan presentation was delivered, and this was followed by questions using an interactive voting system, Mentimeter.

The session began with the 'icebreaker' question – *'Fast forward to 2030 and imagine the best version of Rotherham possible. What would you like the borough to be like as a place to live?'*

There were 68 responses in total from 32 participants, and the most common responses were (in order of most popular), safe (9), vibrant (7), clean (5), prosperous, proud, and thriving (all 4). The full set of responses are displayed in the word cloud below:



Participants were then asked, *‘What do you think of the current council plan themes, and do they look right?’* 33 respondents said yes and two said no. A follow up question was then posed that asked *‘If no, then what is missing? Or should anything be deleted or merged?’* There were ten responses to this question, including: climate change, ageing well, mental health, cultural destination, a focus on better housing, and cohesive communities. More detailed responses suggested that:

- The themes should be more explicit about specifics e.g. the cycle of poverty
- The value of keeping the themes the same for consistency
- The expanding economic opportunity theme is a bit vague.

Finally, participants were asked *‘What are the biggest opportunities for regeneration and environment for the next few years?’*. There were 55 responses from 28 participants. The most popular responses included; green spaces/greening, environment, investment, and housing. The full set of responses are set out in the word cloud below:

A background presentation on the Council Plan was delivered, outlining themes and the consultation approach. This was followed by breakout group sessions which began with the 'icebreaker' question and a discussion on the themes and focus for the plan.

Icebreaker question – *'Fast forward to 2030 and imagine the best version of Rotherham possible. What would you like the borough to be like as a place to live?'*

The most popular response to this question was that they wanted Rotherham to be a safe place and for people to feel safe when travelling in and around their communities (many cited current issues around security at interchange; street lighting; people asking for money aggressively in the street; and people taking drugs/drinking in the streets). They wanted a cleaner environment with improved footpaths and walkways to improve mental health while out walking. They wanted supported transitions from school into work pathways (including work experience), better mental health awareness (especially in schools with training for teachers to deal with mental health and bullying) and more youth clubs. Other suggestions included more NHS dentists, independent living skills to be taught in schools (budgeting, housing advice), and for everyone to have a voice and access to opportunities.



The groups then moved on to discussing the Council Plan themes and outcomes, and the following question was asked - *'What do you think of the current Council Plan themes and outcomes – do these look right or is there anything else the Council needs to focus on?'*

The responses relating to their thoughts around the themes overall were that:

- The plan covers most key areas but feels very broad
- There are lots of overlap across the themes
- The themes could be more child- friendly (the economic theme in particular is difficult to understand). Another suggestion was for a young person friendly version to be produced.
- The plan should be made more accessible and easier to read
- There are clear linkages across the themes – however 'cleaner and greener' theme feels a bit isolated.

Under the **'every neighbourhood thriving'** theme, the responses included:

- Residents need specific council hubs located in communities to report problems
- Communities need physical spaces to gather, resources and people to facilitate this (staff)
- Community events are important and something positive for residents
- Plant pots don't matter (and could be a waste of money) – there are other things that make a neighbourhood thriving. Young people prefer having things to do rather than how a place looks
- There are people in the community that have important views but might not engage in consultation.

Under the **'people are safe, healthy and live well'** theme, the responses included:

- Safety is a significant issue for young people (and everyone else) and was raised by lots of participants with specific mention of anti-social behaviour, drug dealing, lack of local police (no visibility), and broken street lighting
- Feeling unsafe has a negative impact on mental health and does not support independence
- In relation to the town centre, participants thought it was clean and accessible but feels unsafe (due to all the issues previously mentioned above). They thought that additional

policing was needed in the town centre specifically to tackle drink and drug related issues alongside people asking for money and generally behaving aggressively towards young people

- Specific safety issues with the interchange in the town centre were raised – the group thought that increased security was required to ensure that people feel safe on buses and at the interchange
- Schools need to prioritise young people’s mental health
- Suggestions to enhance feelings of safety included self-defence classes, safety events in local neighbourhoods, neighbourhood watch areas and a community safety centre where young people can talk about their experiences.

Under the **‘every child able to fulfil their potential’** theme, the responses included:

- There are gaps in service provision and activities for teenagers/young people with specific gaps highlighted in relation to 16-17 year olds (it was felt that this particular age group is excluded from children’s services, but not yet old enough to access the adult services)
- Every young person should have opportunity to thrive and fulfil potential – there is a need to raise/foster aspiration in young people
- A need for more youth clubs so young people have somewhere safe and a place to socialise to keep them off the streets. Specifically, places for 11-18 year olds to hang out; it was felt that there is a lot of support for younger children but not enough for those aged 11+. This provision should be away from a school setting, as schools were not considered to be the right environment for young people to feel ‘special/free’
- Youth clubs to provide simple, fun activities (baking, making etc.) and day trips
- More support with bullying in schools, more training for teachers in how to deal with bullying, and better access to school councillors (there was a general feeling of young people not being listened to by the adults in school environments)
- Better understanding of the mental health needs of young people, including more mental health training for teachers and school staff
- Support with job searching/support after school
- Compulsory (and enforced) uniforms in schools – to remove competition and bullying from not having the ‘most current’ or popular clothing and shoes
- Lack of student voice in schools, and no opportunities to get involved in decision making in schools
- Some quality assurance standards and support for foster carers and social workers. Ensure social work caseloads are manageable and that social worker staffing levels are maintained. This comment was to be picked up outside of the consultation meeting.

Under the **‘expanding economic opportunities’** theme, the responses included:

- Investing in local areas but also maintaining existing services
- A need for improved job opportunities
- Better careers advice in schools, with more practical support for transition into adulthood. For example - independent living lessons to be delivered in schools to include things such as information regarding paying bills, financial guidance, options and support, advice
- More work experience and better preparation for the world of work and transition to adulthood
- Town centre would be improved and more welcoming with more shops and parks – cinema is a good addition.

Under the **‘cleaner, greener local environment’** theme, the responses included:

- A stronger focus on the environment and nature is needed as this supports good mental health – currently a lot of green spaces (such as canal sidewalks) feel inaccessible because it is not clean/clear
- Local communities and green spaces are dirty and footpaths in local areas need cleaning, lots of rubbish.

Finally, attendees were asked how they would like to be kept informed on Council Plan developments/progress in the future. Suggestions included communications via school channels (using emails, letters, and assemblies), community Facebook pages, drop-in sessions, word of mouth, and family hubs.

There was also an opportunity for attendees to participate in the short interactions counter exercise. 28 people participated in the ‘either/or’ exercise (although not all participants chose to vote for every question). They were asked to cast a vote in the statement that they believed was the most important. The number of votes cast for each statement are as below with the most popular responses highlighted in green:



Question Number	Statement 1	No. of votes		Statement 2	No. of votes
1	Keeping parks and green spaces looking good	9	or...	Keeping streets clean	10
2	Resurfacing roads	4	or...	Improving local centres	16
3	People with second homes should pay more council tax	13	or...	More services should be cut	5
4	Tackling homelessness	24	or...	Allowing fewer new homes to be built	4
5	The Council should help create new jobs	25	or...	The Council should cut this service	1

The notes from the meeting can be found at appendix 2.

A discussion on the Council Plan also took place at the Young Inspectors meeting on Monday 7th October 2024. The short interaction questions were discussed and the Young Inspectors participated in the counter exercise. 14 Young Inspectors participated in this session and the responses can be found at appendix 3.

Focus Group 5: RMBC staff session – 5 November 2024

This internal staff focus group took place over Microsoft Teams with staff from across the Council. A background presentation on the Council Plan was delivered, outlining themes and the consultation approach. This was followed by breakout group sessions, which began with the ‘icebreaker’ question and a discussion on the themes and the focus for the plan.

'Icebreaker question' – '*Fast forward to 2030 and imagine the best version of Rotherham possible. What will the borough be like as a place for residents to live?*'. The main responses included:

- **Town centre** – a clean, tidy, better, accessible (including public toilets and NHS facilities located within the town centre) and regenerated town centre with more developments like Forge Island, more restaurants and bars, and increased footfall. The town centre would be safe and welcoming (with Town Centre Ambassadors like Sheffield and Barnsley – we should look at their regeneration model) with decent shops and things to do including more cultural events. Above all, the town centre should be safe, ASB should be dealt with and there should be a visible police presence (no point in regeneration if people don't feel safe visiting the town centre). Local shops and independent businesses would be well supported (with no more vape shops!).
- **Feelings of pride** - more pride in the town, feeling proud to live here, being able leave things in the past and move on.
- **Feeling of community and helping each other** – doing more through the neighbourhoods working model. Everyone feeling accepted across all communities. Nice communities, safer places, good engagement between residents and good local amenities.
- **A more equal society with thriving communities**– with affordability, stability, and equality for all. There are too many people currently being supported that are at crisis point, need a greater focus on enabling people.
- **Housing** – better, affordable homes and access to social housing in places where people want to live. Stopping corrupt landlords and people living in bad conditions, which has an impact on their health and pride. Ensuring tenancies are sustainable for the longer term, preventing homelessness. The eradication of homelessness, all services are safe in what they do - workplace safe, less aggression from users. Asbestos issues dealt with and less fuel poverty.
- **Transport** – better and improved public transport links (working with SYMCA). More frequent trains going to different destinations. More frequent bus services with better links across all parts of the borough (not just in certain areas), and services that run later than 11.15pm.
- **Education** - access to good quality education from early years, up to post 16-18, tailored to meet the needs of individuals. High standards of education delivered by multi-academy trusts. Access to pre-school education for those experiencing deprivation. Aspire to excellent SEND provision in schools. Better engagement in post-16 education.
- **Young people** – better and safer places for young people to go. A big youth centre (similar to the Barnsley model).
- **Creating opportunities for all** – including training and job opportunities, instilling aspiration at a young age. Promoting local recruitment opportunities – e.g. job fairs. Support for thriving businesses.
- **Health and social care** – better access to mental health services, better services for carers and adult social care (more funding).

- **Organisational comments** – Rotherham is in a better budget position than many neighbouring councils but appears to invest less. In the future, all services should work together more effectively and have shorter waiting lists.
- **Environment** – Carbon net zero, fewer emissions, and clean air.

Question 1 - *‘What do you think of the current Council Plan themes. Do these look right? If no, what is missing? Or should anything be deleted or merged?’*. Some participants agreed that the themes sound good and covers most of what the organisation should be delivering. Some of the main points raised included:

- **General comments on themes**
 - Need to make the wording clearer, explain what each theme means, and provide some examples
 - Need to strengthen the One Council theme and what this actually means
 - Every child able to fulfil their potential theme – needs a better focus on SEND. What does children fulfilling their potential look like?
 - Themes need greater focus on climate change, with more emphasis on resilience, flooding defences, and links to active travel - “Don’t hold back as a council around climate change, go for it!”
 - Climate change and recycling should connect better to economic opportunity and job creation.
- **General comments on consultation processes**
 - Not everyone is consulting on their plans and strategies to the same extent as the Council Plan and it is important that more do this
 - Need more staff ownership and better engagement as it is difficult to get people to participate.
- **General organisational comments**
 - The Council needs to build trust with residents (this comes down to resources) and get better at sharing information
 - Need to work with residents on co-production (there are good examples of this in housing and Adult Social Care)
 - Function needs to be simplified - too many hoops to jump through that means that things don't happen!
 - Need to be more decisive and have greater accountability
 - Each directorate has their own service plan, they need merging together to get a better corporate approach
 - Lack of resources, difficult to get things done - hard to implement, chain of approval.
 - Improve the morale of staff through better sharing of good news stories
 - Good to know what the current situation is to get a better idea of what's happening across the board
 - Acknowledge what the current issues are to be able to improve things
 - We need to better visualise the end goal in order to engage staff and residents in the journey.

Question 2 – *‘What do you think are the biggest opportunities for the Council for the next few years? Consider where we can have the greatest impact to improve the lives of residents’*. Some of the ideas included:

- Climate change, resilience, retrofit of homes, infrastructure, reducing bills, grants for people

- Focus on smaller steps we can all take around climate change
- Focus on the working age population – adopt a lifestyle learning ethos which doesn't have to be a qualification as this doesn't suit everyone
- Job creation - do more with businesses helps lift people out of poverty, learn skills, keep homes
- Adopt an electric bike scheme around the town (like York and Birmingham Council).
- Strive to have a more reliable public transport system
- Changing the perception of Rotherham (currently only mentioned in a bad light) and promoting good news stories
- Further development around advanced manufacturing and technology, Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC)
- Address the lack of shopping offer – attract more high-quality shops
- Housing is very important – need to do more on affordable housing
- Acquisition of empty buildings for shops and homes. Aim to increase the housing offer in the town centre to make it a more thriving place
- Better prevention work, for example, rather than tackling homelessness here and now, we should be going into schools to educate young people about it.

Focus Group 6: Voluntary and Community groups – 6 November 2024

The meeting took place at and was facilitated by Voluntary Action Rotherham. The session was attended by approximately 20 people representing a wide range of groups from the voluntary and community sector including representatives from protected characteristic groups. A background presentation on the Council Plan was delivered, outlining themes and the consultation approach. This was followed by breakout group sessions which began with the ice-breaker question and a discussion on the themes and focus for the plan.

'Icebreaker' question – 'Fast forward to 2030 and imagine the best version of Rotherham possible. What would you like the borough to be like as a place to live?'

The most popular response to this question was that they wanted Rotherham to be a safe place with vibrant and plentiful community facilities including lots of green space, improved waterways, and community gardens. Also frequently mentioned was a vibrant and welcoming town centre with good transport links. They wanted things for young people to do – including more youth clubs and they wanted people to have a sense of pride in the borough.

Question 1 – 'What three things are most important to you? And what can the Council do to help respond to these?'

The groups then moved on to discuss the question surrounding what was important to them and what the Council can do to help respond. The responses included:

- The need to **create inclusive and cohesive communities**. Suggestions to achieve this included:
 - More events needed across the borough and in the town centre
 - More spaces needed for people from different cultures to come together to socialise, and more needs to be done to educate people on different cultures and backgrounds to foster better relationships
 - More investment in our young people - more activities for teens and young people – more children's hubs and youth groups
 - Affordable and accessible community facilities (especially for VCS delivery).
 - Creating a better living environment – including community gardens, wildflower planting, and better use of waterways
 - Regeneration of deprived areas
 - Safer spaces.

- The need to **support people into good, well-paid employment to alleviate poverty.** Suggestions to achieve this included:
 - Fostering pride and purpose, encourage young people to stay in the borough by creating an attractive employment offer
 - Improving volunteering pathways into employment
 - Creating more employment opportunities tailored to people's specific needs
Encourage a diverse range of opportunities - education is not suitable for everyone, support employers and encourage more young people to work in trades
 - Tailoring important career choices at school to suit the individual, and development pathways should be identified to help lead people into employment from school
 - Working with employers to create more viable apprenticeship options - different approach needed to apprenticeships as these are not always an affordable option as apprentices are often not paid enough to sustain their employment
 - Removing barriers to engagement in community activities, encourage mentorship and critical friends.

- The need to look at **prevention and early intervention.** Suggestions to achieve this included:
 - Looking at the root cause of issues for individuals.
 - Addressing poverty
 - More support for community groups and not-for-profit organisations.
 - Better mental health provision
 - More support for recovery.

- The need for **more support for social care.** Suggestions to achieve this included:
 - More funding for adult social care
 - Maintaining independence, choice, and control - with access to support services that are tailored to the individual's needs
 - Supporting the elderly with care needs
 - More recognition for care workers and unpaid workers
 - Better and more accurate information and communication, including better information and advice for older people and those living in deprivation.
 - Ageing friendly community.

- The need for **a thriving town centre.** Suggestions included:
 - Create an alternative offer to Meadowhall and Parkgate
 - More spaces dedicated to independent makers
 - Create spaces for art projects that are free and accessible
 - Affordable town centre rents
 - Better parking
 - More green space to sit, eat and talk
 - Bring it back to life.

- The need for **the Council to prioritise support for the VCS to ensure sustainability.** Suggestions included:
 - Contracts with VCS to enable sustainable services and more funding
 - Better, more effective, fair, and co-designed commissioning to understand the whole picture of what is being commissioned
 - Less onerous paperwork

- Other items that were discussed included:
 - Better transport (especially buses) and a transport strategy that increases access and better connects communities
 - Digital inclusion
 - It is difficult to object to planning decisions, this could be simplified
 - Better communications and myth-busting needed so people understand why and how money is being spent – the perception is that some council budgets are mis-spent, and decision making is poor (made particular reference to cycle lanes that go nowhere)
 - Making Rotherham a safer place – tackling crime
 - More devolution of funding and decision making to local areas.

Question 2 – *‘What do you think of the current Council Plan themes and outcomes – do these look right or is there anything else the Council needs to focus on?’*

The groups then moved on to discussing the Council Plan themes and outcomes. The responses mostly related to their thoughts on the themes generally (as opposed to specific themes) and included:

- A consensus that the themes are very generic and difficult to disagree with, however by covering everything that the Council does, it then makes it unclear what is most important and what is being prioritised.
- The Council vision and activities are too short term – they are only firefighting and not tackling big issues. They provide support at a time of crisis, rather than preventative support.
- Make themes easy for people to understand
- One Rotherham would be better and more inclusive than One Council. This theme should be more connected to Rotherham and what is ‘out there in the community’ to tell the story across the piece
- Need to ensure we have a root cause and understanding of issues
- Cost of living doesn’t feature strongly enough – it is buried within the themes
- The ageing population is having an impact on the wider population – an ageing society is everyone. Older people are pigeonholed in the health and social care sections, but what is good for older people is good for younger people too
- Important to reflect that all the themes are connected
- Need to improve knowledge and understanding of front door services to help with prevention
- The Council website needs to be made simpler for people to use
- KPIs – need to be clear about how these are impacting on priorities
- Need to ensure that residents’ voices are heard
- Need to uphold standards for landlords to maintain properties and keep them clean and tidy as this can impact on health, pride etc
- Need to market Rotherham in a positive light within the themes and plan
- Need a bigger focus on making the borough cleaner as this links to pride
- Instilling pride and being proud doesn’t come through strongly enough in any of the themes
- How much control does the Council actually have over the actions underneath the themes? i.e. how devolved to local government are they and how many are dictated by central government constraints?
- Is it realistic to aim to cover all those themes from a financial point of view?
- Is there any scope to involve large businesses to investing in community facilities, with more emphasis on giving back (social value)? Need to make a bigger ask of partners and

the private sector e.g. work experience for young people, sponsorship of community spaces.

Question 3 – *‘Creating a better borough needs everyone’s support. What can you do to help?’*. The group made the following suggestions and pledges:

- Talk positively about the borough to help to raise its profile to improve the perceptions about Rotherham
- Connect and challenge
- Enable collaboration to create great outcomes for older people
- Share expertise in personalisation, communities, and engagement
- As a charity, everything we do is for public benefit – we are for people, not for profit.
- Ask us for help and we will direct appropriately
- Let VCS share information with the Council on what that they do, including outcomes and impacts
- It takes a community to grow a child – promote independence and pride
- VCS can help to promote the directory of support services that are available
- Provide volunteering opportunities and life skills
- Provide support and supplies to food banks from allotments
- Promote civic mindedness – encourage people to feel that their voices are important.
- Instil aspiration in young people
- If the Council increases engagement with the VCS, they can spread the word about what is available for residents on their behalf
- Leading on projects relating to pride and sense of belonging
- Communication – spread the word about all the good things that are happening across the borough.

Finally, attendees were asked how they would like to be kept informed on Council Plan developments/progress in the future. There was agreement that the consultation should be part of ongoing conversations. Suggestions included workshops and regular face to face meetings. There was a request that the VCS need to know how they get invited to be a part of the decision-making process and become more involved in what is happening in the borough.

Additional feedback regarding the Council from the session included:

- The Council needs to go back to basics as it frequently shares dated information with VCS groups
- Many examples of the Council continuing to work in silos and a lack of communication between departments. Concerns were expressed about different parts of the Council requesting the same information and not joining this up
- VCS groups feel undervalued and unsupported by the Council. Suggestions were made that the Council only approaches the VCS when we need their help.
- Feeling that the Council do not understand what some VCS groups do and the value that they bring. It was stated that the Council never makes contact with groups regarding their work or the number of people they have supported – VCS groups would like to be able to feed in what they are doing, and numbers being supported beyond contracts. Some attendees felt that the Council should be using VCS statistics and data to report alongside their own to demonstrate the wider work of the whole borough, not just the Council e.g. mental health support, CSE, volunteering opportunities. Should be shouting about how we are all collectively making a difference

- Communication and consultation is of poor quality and inconsistent. Groups do not understand how decisions are being made and why they are being made, and feel they are not being consulted.

Focus Group 7: RMBC Elected Member session – 12 November 2024

This focus group with Elected Members took place virtually over Microsoft Teams. The Council plan background presentation was delivered, which included information on the approach to the consultation, and this was followed by an open discussion session.

Under the **‘every child able to fulfil their potential’** theme, there were questions covering the council’s approach to fostering and the capacity to provide suitable housing for potential and existing foster carers (this query was taken away as an idea for further discussion with relevant staff).

Under the **‘every neighbourhood is thriving’** theme, there were questions relating to the town centre regeneration and ensuring that planned projects happen. There was also a question on statutory challenges around the allocation policy on the sale of strategic sites. It was confirmed that a report will be coming back through Cabinet on this within the next couple of months.

Under the **‘one council’** theme, there were questions relating to the five ‘either/or’ statements and their purpose and effectiveness as part of the consultation. The response was that the questions were choices for the Council to consider and could help to inform budget setting for the next year. The questions were asked to ensure that the consultation did not only consist of a list of things that residents want. There was a further comment relating to why there were no questions included on active travel, and what would happen if the government remit on this funding changed. The response was that the active travel work is driven by government grants, and we are trying to make best use of the resources that has been made available to us. If the Council’s direction on that changes, then we will be responding to the national policy changes.

Under the **‘cleaner, greener local environment’** theme, there were queries around electric charging installation requirements for new build homes and housing developments, and whether the Council was being ambitious enough in its electric charging provision plans. There were additional comments on transport relating to electric buses and working on accessibility, journey routes, and times to improve the usage take up among under 25’s and elderly residents. The response confirmed that there was a specific round of government funding for converting buses to electric, so the Council was able to exploit that for the Stagecoach vehicles currently being used. The Council is trying to make the most of opportunities as and when they arise to best secure government funding that will improve the borough.

There were questions relating to the **performance monitoring of the Council Plan** and the targets, milestones and vision for the Council going forward and how these would be monitored, measured, and progress tracked. It was confirmed that they would either include key milestones, or targets to ensure we remain accountable. There are some actions that don’t have targets against them, as it is not appropriate. Underneath the set of KPI’s, there are several data sets within services that managers use to make sure the actions are effectively delivered. The most meaningful measures have been deliberately adopted that allow the journey of the Council Plan to be tracked. The Year Ahead Delivery Plan is reviewed every six months, so that the delivery of the broader projects and activities within the plan can be tracked against those KPIs. There is a selection of things that best demonstrate progress against each of those priorities, which brings

the plan to life. There are additional local data sets available that can help track progress, however the detail provided is appropriate to members of the public.

Short Interactions

The consultation included a series of short interaction activities which took place with participants in various ways, using the same three questions:

- *What do you most like about where you live?*
- *What is one thing would you improve about your area?*
- *What is your one wish for the future for Rotherham?*

This is a simple engagement exercise, a conversation starter. It has the capacity to collect substantive qualitative data, but due to its informal nature it is difficult to collect monitoring data. Therefore, the analysis is based on number of responses to determine common denominators.

In order to reach out to as many characteristic groups as possible, we tailored the activity to encourage people to engage in a way that best suited them.

This activity took place at the following locations:

- Rotherham Show in Clifton Park for two days on 7 and 8 September, using the consultation tower and the counter activity
- The Rotherham Together Partnership showcase event on 17 September at the Arc Cinema, Forge Island using the consultation tower
- The Chamber Means Business Event at New York Stadium on 19 September, using the display boards and the counter activity
- University Centre Rotherham on the 26 September, using the consultation tower
- Aston Community Library and Neighbourhood Hub on 9 October, using the consultation tower
- The Unity Centre Refugee and Asylum Seeker drop-in on 15 October, using the display boards
- Dinnington Library and Neighbourhood Hub on 16 October, using the consultation tower
- Maltby Library and Neighbourhood Hub on 18 October, using the consultation tower
- Chislett Centre in Kimberworth over 50's lunch group on 22 October – conversation with attendees using the three questions
- Housing Involvement Panel open day at New York stadium on 23 October, using the display boards
- Rawmarsh Library and Neighbourhood hub on 23 October, using the consultation tower.
- Riverside Library Café on 24 October, using the consultation tower
- Riverside Library Café Ukraine drop-in session on the evening of 24 October, using the consultation tower
- Swinton Library and Neighbourhood hub on 30 October, using the consultation tower
- Hellaby Depot staff session on 7 November, using the display boards.

In total, there were 1,499 individual responses across all questions. The results below do not include the responses from Rotherham Show, this is because the responses have been analysed in a separate section.

Question 1: What do you most like about where you live?

There were 353 responses to this question across all the short interaction sessions. The most common responses (in order of most frequently mentioned) are as follows:

- **The people** - The top response in the short interactions to what people liked about where they live was the people; including having good neighbours, community spirit, and a willingness to help each other (24%)
- **Parks and green spaces** - The second highest response was having access to parks and green spaces, with references to the countryside as well (20%)
- **Quiet and peaceful** - Many respondents also liked the fact that where they lived was quiet and peaceful (9%)
- **Local amenities** – People also felt that they had good local amenities and facilities where they lived (7%)
- **Location** – 6% of respondents felt that they lived in a good location and that it was close to other areas.

Question 2: What is one thing you would improve about your area?

There were 353 responses to this question across all the short interaction sessions. The most common responses (in order of most frequently mentioned) are as follows:

- **Regeneration of the town centre** - The most common theme running through all events was a desire to see Rotherham town centre as a vibrant, flourishing, clean, and safe place (13%)
- **Community safety / anti-social behaviour** – 10% of respondents wanted to feel safe and secure and for improved safety and security measures to be put in place in certain areas, mainly in the town centre
- **Public transport** – Respondents wanted public transport in Rotherham to be improved (10%), including cheaper fares, more frequent buses, and additional public transport links/routes
- **Cleaner streets** - Rotherham people would like to see cleaner streets that are free from litter and fly-tipping (9%), stating that this could be achieved by more pro-active measures such as raising awareness and education around these matters, coupled with greater enforcement put in place to encourage prevention
- **Roads** - People expressed that they would like to see roads kept in good condition, repaired when needed, and pavements well maintained so that they can be accessible for disabled people and young families (7%).

Question 3: What is your one wish for the future for Rotherham?

There were 321 responses to this question across all the events. The most common responses (in order of most frequently mentioned) are as follows:

- **Regeneration of the town centre** - 11% of people wanted continued regeneration of the town centre and felt that this was key to improve the reputation of the town
- **More services for children and young people** – 8% of respondents wanted more services and more activities/things to do for children and young people, both in the town centre and in the outlying areas such as Maltby, Dinnington and Swinton
- **Feeling safer** - 8% of respondents commented that they wanted to feel safer in Rotherham, particularly in the town centre. The issue of people drinking or taking drugs in the town centre was raised, which made people feel uneasy

- **Improved retail offer** - 6% of respondents also wanted an improved retail offer in the town centre, including more independent shops. However, some people realised that a reduction in the number of shops in town centres was a national issue, not only in Rotherham
- **Improved reputation** - The main response was around people wanting to feel proud about Rotherham, and for the town to be prosperous and thriving again (5%). They wanted Rotherham to have a better reputation and to be in the news for positive reasons.



Photo from Maltby Library and Neighbourhood Hub consultation

Rotherham Show

The short interactions activity took place at the Rotherham Show in Clifton Park on 7 and 8 September 2024. A three-sided consultation tower was used, which asked the three questions. Alongside this, an exercise using ten boxes with five paired statements was used, and people were asked to put a counter in the box of the statement they most agreed with. These activities were situated in the 'Rockingham Field and Food Court' area of the show, within the Council Plan and Neighbourhoods marquee.

Across the two days over 400 responses were received across all three questions, and over 450 votes were cast in the counter exercise. No monitoring data was collected; however, participants were asked if they were happy to supply a postcode or state their local area or ward. From observation, a diverse range of people engaged with the activity.



Tower question 1: What do you like most about where you live?

There were 175 responses to this question over the two days of the show. The most common responses (in order of most frequently mentioned) featured:

- **Community spirit** - An appreciation of the community spirit in Rotherham, with particular mention of 'friendly' neighbours (15%)
- **Parks and green spaces** - An appreciation of the parks and green spaces within the borough. Many people made warm references to Clifton Park (this may have been influenced by the location of the consultation) and other parks within the borough (7%). Nice play areas and green spaces, specifically designed for children, were often mentioned as part of the same response (15%)
- **Education** - Many participants made positive references to the schools in their local area (7%)
- **Quietness** - Many cited that the quietness of their local area was what they liked most about where they lived (9%)
- **Amenities** - People also reflected on the local facilities and amenities within Rotherham, with specific mention of Forge Island and the new Arc Cinema (10%).

Tower question 2: What is one thing you would improve about your area?

There were 159 responses to this question over the two days of the show. The most common responses related to:

- **Cleanliness** - Concerns over street cleanliness, including references to litter, dog fouling, and general upkeep (11%)
- **Road improvements** - The need for road and footpath improvements and maintenance, including repairs to uneven pavements (7%)
- **Public safety and crime prevention** - Concerns surrounding public safety and crime prevention within the borough (18%). Many cited feelings of safety, particularly within the town centre, as an area for improvement. This included calls to tackle anti-social behaviour and increase police presence within Rotherham. Pleas to curb drug use were mentioned frequently.
- **Town centre regeneration** - Improvements to Rotherham town centre, including the need for more development, improved infrastructure, and better parking to make it a place that

people want to visit. Many were passionate about increasing the number of shops and restaurants within the town centre, and also across the borough (7%)

- **Facilities in the local area** - Better infrastructure within local areas, in particular leisure facilities and community-based hubs/activities to facilitate a greater sense of community spirit and inclusion (5%)
- **Parking facilities** – A need for increased parking facilities within the local area (4%).
- **Public transport** - Improvements to public transport across the borough (6%), specifically more regular and improved bus services.
- **Children and young people** - More support for Rotherham's children and young people (5%), including investment in activities, resources, services, and employment advice for teenagers in Rotherham.
- **Play areas and parks** - Improved play areas and parks to ensure better wellbeing and safety for children and parents (4%)
- **Increased SEN support for children and adults** - Increased help and support for those with disabilities, particularly an expansion of SEN support for children and adults within the borough (1%).

Question 3: What is your one wish for the future for Rotherham?

There were 138 responses to this question over the two days of the show. The most common responses included:

- **Regeneration of the town centre** - The regeneration of Rotherham town centre, with calls for a thriving and attractive town centre that people would like to visit (15%). Many suggested that this would improve the image of Rotherham and foster pride
- **Retail in the town centre** - More investment in the town centre, particularly in relation to retail and an increase in the number of shopping facilities (9%). There was a clear passion for Rotherham to have a desirable, prosperous, and successful town centre with lots of shops
- **Leisure and cultural activities** - More leisure facilities and additional investment in cultural activities (11%). Examples included more concerts in Clifton Park; skateparks across the borough; more events like Rotherham Show; and the creation of new attractions such as the new Arc cinema on Forge Island
- **Opportunities for young people** - More opportunities and investment in activities for young people, in particular more community centres and youth groups to help support young people in Rotherham (6%)
- **Support for communities** - A wider need for support for whole communities, many responses referred to a wish for more facilities and activities that support children and families. People also wished for harmony, peace, community spirit and social cohesion within the borough (8%)
- **Community safety** - Improved community safety, greater police presence, and for crime to reduce in the local area (7%)
- **Street cleanliness** - An improvement in street cleanliness, with specific mention of litter. Some participants wanted to encourage the local community to take increased ownership of their environment (9%).



Counter Exercise Results

464 counters were cast in the 'either/or' exercise over the two days of the show. Participants were given 5 counters each and asked to vote on 5 paired statements by placing a counter in the box with their preferred statement for each pair. It was set out to those taking part that the Council is responsible for providing a range of services and for each pair of statements they were provided with, respondents were asked to identify which mattered most to them. The number of votes cast for each statement are as below, with the most popular responses highlighted in green:

Question Number	Statement 1	No. of votes		Statement 2	No. of votes
1	Keeping parks and green spaces looking good	60	or...	Keeping streets clean	42
2	Resurfacing roads	52	or...	Improving local centres	47
3	People with second homes should pay more council tax	69	or...	More services should be cut	13
4	Tackling homelessness	90	or...	Allowing fewer new homes to be built	8
5	The Council should help create new jobs	79	or...	The Council should cut this service	4

Online and Postal Survey

The online survey went 'live' on the Council website for eight weeks, from 6 September to 31 October 2024. There were ten questions in total, three of which were the same questions asked in the short interactions. There were also five pairs of 'either/or' statements, where respondents had to choose which of the priorities are the most important to them for each of the five questions. There were 214 responses to the online survey in total.

The postal survey ran concurrent to the online survey. A paper version of the online survey questions was also sent out to 500 randomly selected households across the borough with a freepost envelope provided. In total, 41 postal survey responses were received, which is an 8% return rate. This was a higher percentage than the national average return rate on a postal survey, which is between 3% and 4%.

Below are the key findings in both the online and postal survey responses combined:

Where you live

The survey opened with the same three questions that were asked as part of the short interactions. The first question asked, '*What do you most like about where you live?*'.

The most common responses (in order of most frequently mentioned) are as follows:

- **Parks and green spaces** - In open comments residents listed Rotherham's abundance of green space as the best thing about where they live. 26% of comments mentioned

proximity to green spaces, the countryside, and parks as the best thing about living in the borough

- **Peace and quiet** - 15% of respondents liked the fact that the local area was nice and quiet
- **Close to local amenities** - People felt like they had good local amenities in their area and 14% said that they liked the fact that they lived close to local amenities
- **The people** - 14% mentioned their neighbours and good community spirit as what they liked most about where they lived
- **Location** - 8% liked the location and the fact that they were in close proximity to other areas.

The next question was '*What is one thing you would improve?*'. The main responses are as follows:

- **Anti-social behaviour** - 17% of respondents wanted more to be done to tackle anti-social behaviour in their local area. Motorists speeding in residential areas was particularly flagged as an issue
- **Roads** - Residents felt that improvements were needed to roads within the area, with 12% highlighting the fact that roads and pavements needed repairing, along with grass verges at the roadside needing to be cut back
- **Better maintained green spaces** - The same percentage of people felt that green spaces in their local area needed to be better maintained (12%)
- **Cleaner streets** - This was followed by respondents wanting cleaner streets with less litter (11%), both in the town centre and in their local area
- **Parking** - 6% felt that parking was an area that needed improvements, with responses mentioning motorists parking on kerbsides, blocking driveways, and accessibility for disabled pedestrians. Respondents also mentioned that they would like free parking in the town centre.

Other comments included more activities for children and young people (5%) and improved bus services, including extra routes, cheaper fares, and a more reliable service.

The third question in this section was '*What is your one wish for the future for Rotherham?*'. Again, the most common responses are as follows:

- **Proud, prosperous, and thriving** - The main response was around people wanting to feel proud about Rotherham, and for the town to be prosperous and thriving again (17%). They wanted Rotherham to have a better reputation and to be in the news for positive reasons.
- **Feeling safer** - 13% of respondents commented that they wanted to feel safer in Rotherham, particularly in the town centre
- **Regeneration of the town centre** - 13% of people wanted continued regeneration of the town centre
- **Cleaner streets** - As in the previous question, respondents wanting cleaner streets came up again in the top five responses at 6%
- **Improved retail offer** - 6% of respondents also wanted an improved retail offer in the town centre, including more independent shops. However, some people realised that a reduction in the number of shops in town centres was a national issue, and that Rotherham is not the only place with a declining number of shops.

Your Opinion

The next section of the survey asked respondents to choose between pairs of statements and decide which was the most important to them or which was the one they agreed with the most. These were the same pairs of statements that were used for the counter box exercise at Rotherham Show. A written explanation was provided to participants to enable them to complete

the question. This highlighted that the Council is responsible for providing a range of services and for each pair of statements that they were provided with, respondents were asked to identify which mattered most to them.

Question Number	Statement 1	No. of votes		Statement 2	No. of votes
1	Keeping parks and green spaces looking good	97	or...	Keeping streets clean	145
2	Resurfacing roads	180	or...	Improving local centres	66
3	People with second homes should pay more council tax	220	or...	More services should be cut	19
4	Tackling homelessness	187	or...	Allowing fewer new homes to be built	56
5	The Council should help create new jobs	218	or...	The Council should cut this service	31

The final question in the online and postal survey was an open text box that asked the respondent if there was anything else they wanted to let us know through the consultation? As this was an open question, the responses varied greatly. However, the following came out as the most common responses:

- Improved public transport links, lower fares, and more reliable services – 5%
- That the Council spends public money more wisely – 5%
- More affordable housing – 5%
- Improve the outlying areas of Rotherham – 3%
- That the Council listens to resident's views – 2%.

Postal Survey Responses

Of the 41 postal survey responses, 88% of people completed the equalities questions at the end. Of those, 83% were White British and were mainly older/retired people, with 65% of respondents who provided their age being 65 or older. Only 15% of respondents who provided their age were aged between 35-64 (with no responses received from people aged 18-34).

45% of postal respondents were male and were 40% female. None of the respondents stated that they identified as transgender. When asked about their sexual orientation, 78% stated that they were heterosexual and 12% did not respond to the question. 68% of respondents stated that their religion was Christianity, 3% Muslim and the remainder of those that responded stated that they had no religion (15%). None of the respondents from the postal survey said that they were asylum seekers or refugees, and 20% said that they were carers.

Key findings from the postal responses included:

'What do you most like about where you live?', the top five responses were:

- Quiet and peaceful (33%)

- Green spaces and countryside (30%)
- The people and community spirit (20%)
- Close to amenities (13%)
- Cleanliness of the local area (13%).

The top four responses were the same as the online survey. However, the exception is that the postal responses regarded cleanliness of the local area in the top five responses rather than location and Rotherham being close to other areas, like in the online survey.

'What is the one thing you would improve about your area?', the top five responses were:

- Green spaces to be better maintained (25%)
- Road improvements, including traffic management and improving the surface of roads/pavements (20%)
- Cleaner streets (15%)
- Anti-social behaviour, including speeding (15%)
- Public transport, including better transport links, lower fares, and more reliable services (10%).

The top four responses were also the same as those from the online survey. However, the exception is that the postal responses regarded public transport in the top five responses rather than parking, like in the online survey.

'What is your one wish for the future of Rotherham?', the top five responses were:

- Regeneration of the town centre (28%)
- Improvement in retail offer (28%)
- Safety, particularly in the town centre (25%)
- Cleaner streets (18%)
- Affordable housing (8%).

Four out of the top five responses were the same as the online survey but differed in order of importance. However, the exception is that the postal responses regarded affordable housing in the top five responses rather than proud, prosperous, and thriving place like in the online survey.



Photo from Dinnington Library and Neighbourhood Hub consultation

4. Conclusion

Summary of findings across focus groups

The presentations at the focus groups were well received and the general feedback (in particular at the external focus groups) was that participants welcomed the opportunity to engage, provide useful insights, and give their opinions on the priorities for the Council Plan. There was a real enthusiasm for continuing the conversation and for officers to keep engaging with them on a regular basis to provide updates on the plan.

The comments received were mostly thematic, with many areas of commonality across the sessions. The most frequently talked about subjects were:

- Safety and feelings of safety – with particular emphasis on the town centre
- The continued development and investment in the town centre
- Housing – including providing high quality, affordable homes and tackling homelessness
- Young people – including things for them to do, instilling aspiration, obtaining a good quality education, better SEND provision, improved careers advice and pathways to work, and providing a good work offer for them to want to stay in the borough
- The environment – including green spaces, net zero, flooding, climate change
- The need for a better transport offer across the borough – particularly bus services
- Improving access to culture and leisure facilities and continuing to maintain parks and play areas to high standards
- Improved access to health services – particularly mental health
- Continued cost of living support to alleviate poverty and inequalities
- Feelings of pride, community cohesion and neighbourliness in the borough. A need to harness all of the good things that are happening in communities
- Attracting investment to provide good quality jobs and create opportunities
- Comments relating to the organisation itself, including the role of the council and what it can provide for residents (given funding constraints) and what residents can do for themselves, also taking into consideration how it is able to respond to central government decisions. Adopting prevention and early intervention models. Having simplified, achievable plans, with an overall long term vision. Working in partnership, commissioning services and developing strategies collectively and sharing information and intelligence.

Combined Findings across the Short Interactions, Online and Postal Survey

Overall, for the three questions that were asked as part of the online survey, postal survey, and the short interaction sessions, the same themes and issues came out in the top five responses but in a different order of importance. With all the feedback combined, the most common responses in order are as follows:

What do you like most about where you live?

1. **Parks and green spaces** – The main thing that residents liked about where they lived was the abundance of green spaces, countryside, and parks
2. **The people** - The next most popular response was friendly neighbours and the fact that there was a good community spirit where they lived
3. **Peace and quiet** – Respondents also liked the fact that it was nice and peaceful where they lived
4. **Close to local amenities** - People felt like they had good local amenities in their area and said that they liked the fact that they were close by
5. **Location** – Respondents liked the area they lived in and the fact that they were in close proximity to other areas.

What is one thing you would improve about your area?

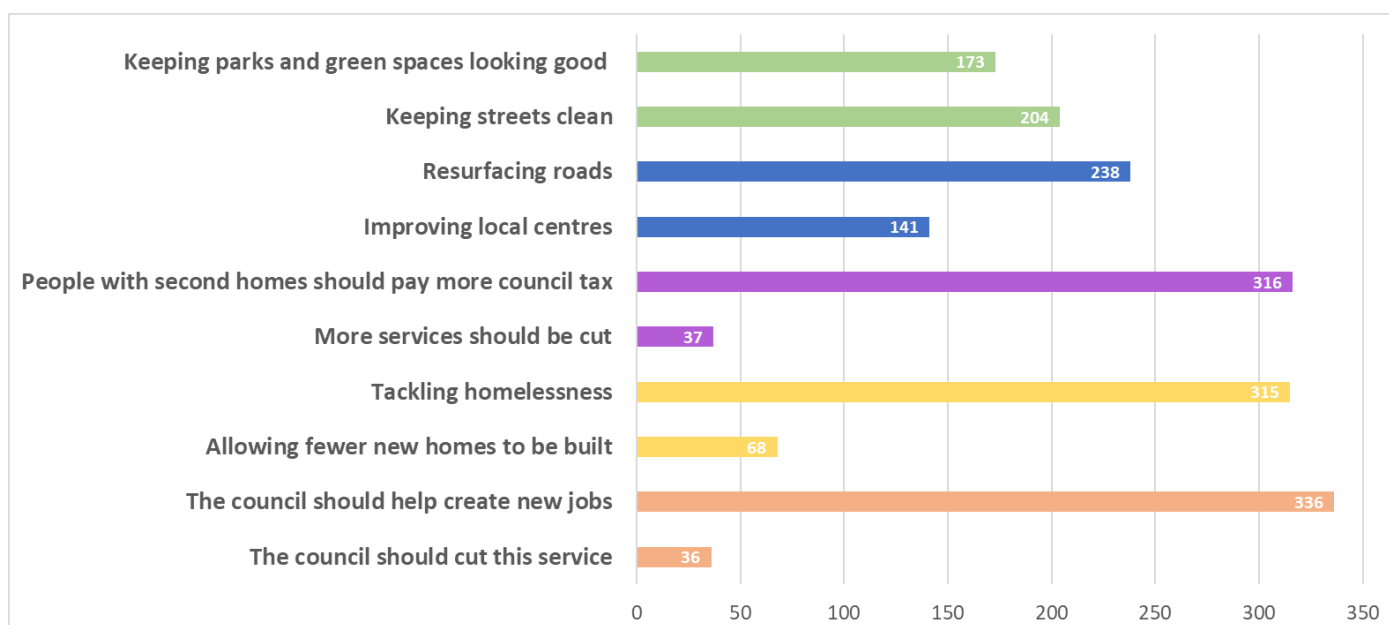
1. **Safety and tackling anti-social behaviour** – the most commonly cited area of improvement was community safety. Respondents wanted more to be done to tackle anti-social behaviour, both in the town centre and in their local area
2. **Cleaner streets** – Followed by respondents wanting less litter and cleaner streets, both in the town centre and in their local area
3. **Roads** - The next area that residents felt needed improvement was the roads, with people highlighting the fact that roads and pavements needed repairing, along with grass verges at the roadside needing to be cut back
4. **Better maintained green spaces** – Respondents also felt that parks and green spaces in their local area needed to be better maintained
5. **Regeneration of the town centre** - People also wanted continued regeneration of the town centre.

What is your one wish for the future for Rotherham?

1. **Regeneration of the town centre** - The main wish for the future was people wanting continued investment and development of the town centre, which also came in the top five for the previous question.
2. **Feeling safer** – The next thing that respondents mentioned was that they wanted to feel safer in Rotherham, particularly in the town centre.
3. **Proud, prosperous and thriving** - People also wanted to feel proud about Rotherham, and for the town to be prosperous and thriving again. They wanted Rotherham to have a better reputation and to be in the news for positive reasons.
4. **Improved retail offer** - Respondents also wanted an improved retail offer in the town centre, including more independent shops. However, some people realised that a reduction in the number of shops in town centres was a national issue and was not something particular to Rotherham.
5. **Cleaner Streets** - As in the previous question, respondents wanting cleaner streets came up again in the top five responses for their wish for the future.

Your Opinion: Counter Box Exercise Summary

The graph below shows the combined results from all responses to the counter box/pairs of statements exercise. This includes online and postal surveys, focus groups with young people (Children’s and Young People’s Partnership Board and Young Inspectors) and Rotherham Show. The graph shows the pairs of statements grouped by colour.



- For the online survey and the young people's focus groups more people chose the statement *'keeping streets clean'* (57% and 52% respectively), whereas *'keeping parks and green spaces looking good'* came out on top for both the postal survey (38%) and Rotherham Show (59%).
- *'Resurfacing roads'* came out as the top response online (71%), as it did at Rotherham Show (although not as strongly at 53%) and in the postal survey (63%). However, for the young people's focus groups *'improving local centres'* came out strongly as the top response (82%). This may be due to the fact that the young people don't drive and are therefore less concerned about the condition of the roads.
- The statement of *'people with second homes should pay more council tax'* came out strongly on top across all areas of engagement including Rotherham Show and young people's focus groups (both 84%) and the online and postal survey (80%), compared with the statement *'more services should be cut'*.
- 73% of respondents on both the online and the postal survey chose the statement of *'tackling homelessness'* over *'allowing fewer new homes to be built'* (22%), which was a similar to both Rotherham Show and the young people's responses although the percentage of people that chose *'tackling homelessness'* was higher for these (both at 91%).
- The statement of *'the Council should help create new jobs'* came out on top strongly across all responses including online and postal survey (85%), Rotherham Show (95%) and young people (98%), compared with the statement *'the Council should cut this service'*.

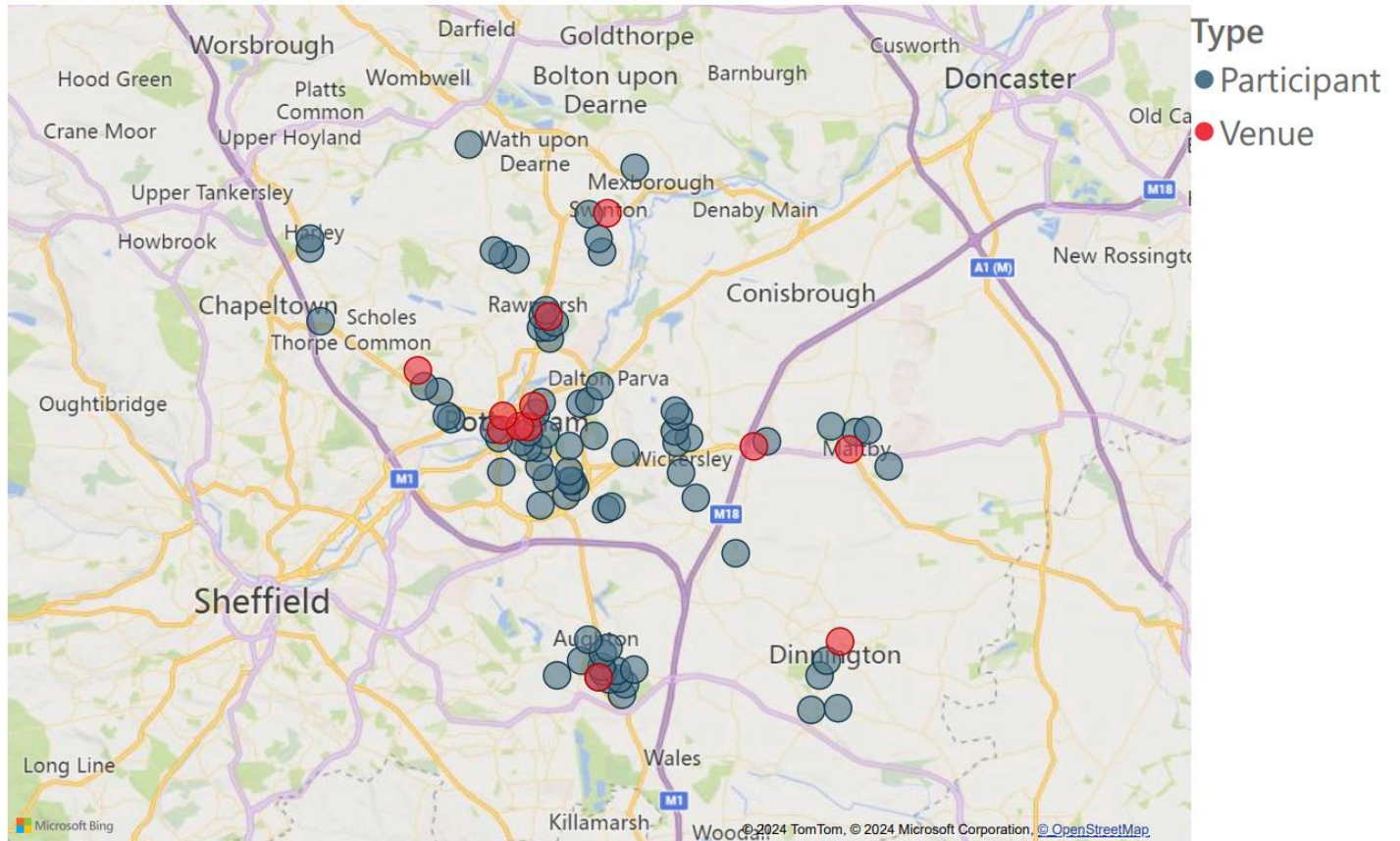
It is worth noting that none of the above percentages in the graph add up to 100%. This is due to the fact that not everyone responded to this question, and in the postal survey people chose both as being important for the first two statement questions (which they would be unable to do on the online version as the form was designed to only allow people to tick one box).

As stated previously, this consultation is seen as part of an ongoing dialogue between the Council and residents. Feedback will continue to be sought, to feed into the Council's Year Ahead Plan and the new Rotherham Partnership Plan. The results of this consultation will help to inform the writing of the new Council Plan for 2025, together with other key Council strategies and plans.

Appendix 1 Map showing short interaction locations and participants

The map below shows the location spread for the short interaction locations (in red) and the participants (in blue). 83 full postcodes were provided by short interaction participants and 80 were Rotherham based.

Location of short interaction venues and participants



Children and Young People Partnership Board

On Tuesday 22nd October 2024, we met in the John Smiths Room of the Town Hall, Alex from the Youth Cabinet chaired our partnership board with Cllr Cusworth. We introduced ourselves and told the group our name, where we go to school or work and the best event we’d been to in Rotherham. We had lots of favourite events, like The Rotherham Show, the Museum of the Moon in Rotherham Minster and the Reytons concert, for some of us having our say at the CYPBB is best!



Tanya told us about the Council Plan for Rotherham and told us about what the current priorities are. She then told us about the consultation activity that was happening and told us how we can impact what goes into the new Council Plan.



We then thought about some of the highlighted priorities and voted the things we thought were most important by putting tokens in wooden boxes.

After we’d voted we spoke in our groups about the Council plan. Tanya and Kellie helped with our conversations. We said that it covered most things but some of the wording wasn’t very child friendly or accessible. We thought there were plenty of things to do for children, but not enough things for teenagers or enough support with the transition from childhood to adulthood. We discussed what we were worried about and said how we see Anti-Social behaviour and broken street lighting and don’t always feel safe, especially when using public transport or when we’re in the town centre. We know that the environment is important, and we’d like to see a cleaner Rotherham as footpaths can be dirty and there’s rubbish in the canal, but we think that there’s more to a thriving neighbourhood than plant pots, as young people prefer to have things to do.



Tanya also asked us to think about how we would like to hear about the results of the consultation and be told about what changes will be made. We thought about this and said that schools are a useful method of communication, through letters, emails or assemblies. There could also be a drop-in to communicate issues and give updates, as well as using social media and asking people to spread the word across the borough.

We fed back our main messages to the group and agreed what should be done!

Our Actions:

- 1) Find out what decisions have been made after the Council Plan consultation is complete.
- 2) The plan needs to consider things to do for teenagers (we like that there is lots of Council activity to improve play/opportunities for younger children but feel there could be more for 11+)
- 3) The plan needs to consider safety. Safety is a key concern for young people.



Appendix 3 Council Plan – Young Inspectors Feedback (14 Young Inspectors)

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT WHERE YOU LIVE?	
Comments	Postcode
Historical Sites – Chapel on the Bridge & Boston Castle	S60
Rotherham Minster	S60
Clifton Park	S60
Roads are well maintained	S60
Voting stations are close by during elections	S60
Reliable waste management – bin collection	S60
Well maintained infrastructure – streetlights, electric, gas	S60
Quiet areas	S60
Nice neighbours	S60
Loads of old people	S60
Boundary Mills	S60
Morrisons	S60
Quiet and no problems	S60
People are nice and helpful	S60
Some shops	S60
The Parks & Woodland Area	S61
Keppel's Column & the history around this and now it is restored	S61
Local Parks – Barkers Park & Greasbrough Park	S61
It is peaceful	S64
Good community	S64
There are scenic, peaceful walks	S64
Large amount of trees and flowers	S64
Simply Skate arena	S65
Good bus links	S65
Shops	S65
Fields	S65
Parks	S65
Mosque close by	S65

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WOULD IMPROVE ABOUT YOUR AREA?	
Comments	Postcode
Improve community feel, and more events	S60
Protection of green spaces	S60
Less grey buildings	S60
More regular bin collections – recycling would benefit from this	S60
Transport links	S60
Vegetation encroachment on roads	S60
Some streets too much litter	S60
Inequalities – There is a difference and imbalance how different areas within S60 are managed – Broom v Wellgate – How do we find out priorities/funding allocation	S60
Littering	S61
Roads	S61
Tackle drug dealers	S61
Too many potholes	S61
Community centres	S61
Community, less racism	S61
Schools, bullying and harassment	S61
There is no route to school that feel safe	S64
No shops	S64

Lots of litter	S64
Improve parks	S65
Environment, add more plants, make areas eco friendly	S65
More outside sports	S65
More displays of religious activities	S65
Tackle late night parties from neighbours	S65
Ban late night music; loud noise	S65
Make all communities aware of loud music, drinking in streets that it is anti-social behaviour	S65
Improve security	S65
Improve cleanliness	S65

WHAT IS YOUR ONE WISH FOR THE FUTURE OF ROTHERHAM?	
Comments	Postcode
More open access information to history of my street/area	S60
Make town centre, less rough and more shops	S60
More flowers and plants	S60
Less litter	S60
A bigger community – nice events and nice town centre	S60
Unique initiatives to set Rotherham apart from other local towns. Use the waterway for boat links from River Don to other towns/cities	S60
More things for teenagers/young adults to do. (Some type of indoor activity/play area)	S61
Better society	S61
Fix the potholes	S61
Less litter	S61
Government that cares	S61
More job opportunities for young people	S61
Security gets better in case of more riots/attacks	S64
Facilitate more opportunities for apprenticeships as an alternative to higher education	S64
Rotherham should be lively, make it famous for right reasons like some cities – London and Manchester	S65
Rotherham should be seen in the future as a developed eco-friendly town	S65
More activities for older teens	S65
Improve university options for students – increase investment in young people	S65
More extracurricular activities	S65
Improve shopping opportunities in town centre	S65
More things to do in entertainment – something different	S65
People need to be kinder and care more	S65

Question Number	Statement 1	No. of votes		Statement 2	No. of votes
1	Keeping parks and green spaces looking good	7	or...	Keeping streets clean	7
2	Resurfacing roads	2	or...	Improving local centres	12
3	People with second homes should pay more council tax	14	or...	More services should be cut	0
4	Tackling homelessness	14	or...	Allowing fewer new homes to be built	0
5	The Council should help create new jobs	14	or...	The Council should cut this service	0