

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Tuesday 9 September 2025

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Baggaley, Blackham, Brent, C. Carter, Garnett, Harper, Lelliott, McKiernan, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors A Carter, Keenan and Monk.

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

27. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2 JULY 2025

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 2 July 2025 be approved as a true record.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

29. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

No questions were received.

30. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no reasons to exclude the press or public.

31. JULY 2025-26 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Finance and Community Safety introduced the item and made the following points:

- This was the financial monitoring report for the period ending July 2025.
- The Council's overall financial position remained positive, despite a forecast overspend of £2.5 million.
- The overspend was composed of a £7.5 million pressure in service directorates, with was offset by £5.3 million in central underspends.
- The overspend was attributed to demand pressures in residential placements, particularly in social care, which reflected the position nationally.
- Inflationary pressures were also a significant factor affecting costs.
- The treasury management strategy was performing well, with short-term borrowing being used to minimise interest costs.
- The capital programme had been updated, with some reprofiling of schemes into 2026-27 but the programme remained ambitious.

- Confidence was expressed that the Council would manage the pressures and return to a balance position through mitigating actions.
- The financial monitoring would continue closely over the coming months.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the item before them.

Councillor Blackham expressed scepticism about the Council's ability to manage the overspend, especially given that two directorates were already significantly over budget just a few months into the financial year. It was suggested that the budgets for those directorates may not be realistic and called for better forecasting.

The Assistant Director, Financial Services acknowledged the concern and explained the Council expected underspends in grant-funded areas. Noting that treasury management was performing well. The Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) directorate overspend was anticipated and offset by central contingencies. The Adult Social Care pressures were being actively managed with mitigating actions. It was confirmed that budget and medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) work was underway to realign budgets.

Councillor Yasseen observed that CYPS had been consistently overspend for a number of years, indicating a mismatch between the resources and demand. It was asked how the Council planned to redesign resources to reflect the true cost of services and what impact this had on other services that were under budget?

The Assistant Director, Financial Services explained the CYPS budget had been reduced over time, even though the overspend appeared consistent. Aspects that had contributed to this were that the number of looked-after children had decreased, but inflation and market costs had driven up placement costs. The internal residential care programme delays had impacted savings. It was clarified that other directorates had made temporary savings without major service delivery impacts.

In a follow-up question, Councillor Yasseen queried how long the Council could continue relying on its reserves and at what point would that approach become a concern?

The Assistant Director, Financial Services confirmed the Council's reserves were robust and had increased over the past few years, with the minimum balance now three times higher than seven years ago. The planned use of reserves was strategic and not a sign of financial weakness. There was confidence that mitigations would allow the Council to balance the budget without excessive use of reserves.

The Chair asked about the impact staff vacancies was having on service

delivery? In response the Chief Executive explained the vacancies were not at critical levels. There had been some areas such as Street Scene where there had been challenges, however overall service delivery was not significantly affected, and recruitment and retention remained a priority.

The Chair sought assurance that reorganisations in CYPS would lead to the appropriate savings? The Assistant Director, Financial Services explained the autumn budget setting process would assess delivered savings and inflation impacts, and the goal was to determine a sustainable base for CYPS without funding overspends.

The Chair asked the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment why the route optimisation saving in Waste Management had been delayed, and what the revised timeline was? The Strategic Director explained that implementation would begin in October following the summer trials and staff consultation.

The Chair followed up with another question to the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment regarding the financial impact of the income generation shortfalls for the country parks and markets. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment provided an update indicating that the country parks income was steady and on target. The income from the market was below target due to ongoing works, indicating that savings would be made elsewhere to offset the shortfall.

Councillor Baggaley raised concerns about the robustness of the CYPS savings plan. Councillor Baggaley then asked about the Brampton Vale strategic acquisitions item. The report indicated the site was reduced from 58 units down to 9 with £1.7 million savings. Clarity was sought around that movement in number of units and number of savings because it was a bit out of kilter with that number of units and that savings. The Assistant Director, Financial Services indicated a written response would be provided to the question via the Chair.

Councillor McKiernan asked about under-occupancy in Council owned children's homes querying why it was not set at 100% and why the Council only owed 85% when there were overspends in this area. Councillor McKiernan followed up indicating that another service was relying on agency support due to staff sickness. This was now the second director experiencing significant absence. Should members be concerned about a broader issue with sickness levels across the Council?

The Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health explained they continued to face challenges related to staff sickness across services. A contributing factor was the ageing workforce, which naturally brought increased physical health issues over time. Whilst the Council actively supported staff through training, improved equipment, and promoting safe working practices, the physical demands of hands-on care do take a toll.

To address this, the Council was focused on attracting younger people into the workforce. It had made significant progress in making the recruitment process more accessible and were prioritising candidates with the right aptitude and potential, which could develop further.

In critical services, where staffing levels directly impacted safety, the Council sometimes needed to use agency support. However, it did not automatically cover all vacancies with agency staff. The impact was assessed, and the aim was to stay within budget to avoid additional financial pressure.

There had been notable improvements, particularly in social care recruitment, and a continued reduction in agency reliance was expected. Nonetheless, the ageing workforce remained a key challenge that would continue to be managed proactively.

The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services said they had seen real progress in reducing agency use, especially in children's services, thanks to a national memorandum that capped agency social worker spend. Those roles were previously among the costliest, so the reduction has had a positive financial impact. Residential services remained a challenge. Homes must meet minimum staffing levels to stay compliant and ensure young people's safety. When staff were off sick or following incidents, the Council had to use agency cover. A recruitment drive for residential workers was underway, supported by HR, which should help reduce agency reliance further.

Regarding the query about residential occupancy, it was noted that this was not just about numbers, it was about stability and care. The Council was working to bring children with complex needs back from expensive external placements, but transitions took time. Behaviour often worsened initially, so flexibility in placements was needed. Most homes were two-bed, and while 100% occupancy was not realistic, the Council aimed for 85%, which was considered high. At times, children might be placed alone or temporarily moved due to property damage. For example, one young person helped repair and repaint their room after an incident, which was a great outcome, though it temporarily reduced occupancy. The Council was working hard to maintain high occupancy while ensuring safe, supportive environments.

The Chair asked about the impact of the local government pay award on the Council's budget? The Assistant Director, Financial Services explained the local government pay award had a projected £2.3 million impact on the budget for the financial year, affecting the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Council had anticipated it might exceed initial assumptions but avoided overestimating during budget setting to prevent unnecessary savings targets.

The actual cost was lower due to staff turnover and vacant posts, which did not attract the pay award. This provided some in-year mitigation and

reduced the overall financial pressure.

Councillor Tinsley queried why the market income shortfalls had not been anticipated and asked whether recruitment to new and existing roles was being held back to offset any overspend?

The Assistant Director, Financial Services explained that recruitment was not paused in any service area to manage the market overspend. There were no corporate instructions to develop in-year savings; instead, strategic directors were expected to manage budgets within existing pressures. Vacancies arose through natural turnover, and recruitment continued as needed. Market service spends proved more challenging than expected. Income recovery from the market project remained below projections, despite budgeted discounts for traders. These shortfalls contributed to ongoing financial pressures, which were partially anticipated in the MTFS.

The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment explained that market footfall had declined compared to previous years, which impacted trader income. However, losses were offset in part by capitalising several posts within the regeneration team against project expenditure. As previously, no vacancies were held. Whenever a post became vacant, recruitment was conducted as quickly as possible to maintain service delivery.

The Vice-Chair noted that the local development plan had to be completely rethought and that there had been reports that it was going to exceed £1 million. It was asked what pressures that might have had on the budget.

In response the Assistant Director, Financial Services explained that the local development plan was an exercise that was undertaken frequently, it was a considered factor when budget planning and MTFS setting, and the team worked with the service to develop what the spend profile of a local development plan would actually be. This was built into the budget and MTFS. It was the cabinet part for the local development plan which referenced the cost of the previous local development plan, which I think was where the £1 million indicator came from. The team worked with the service to see whether that £1 million would hold in the current market, given the amount of work needed to be done on the local development plan. It was used as a benchmark figure.

Councillor C Carter queried section 2.1.2.2 regarding the Finance and Customer Services budget, noting that overall, it looked balanced, however, there was a £0.4 million overspend on catering. More clarity around this overspend was requested. In a follow up question Councillor C Carter also noted the report mentioned several contract changes and asked if those changes had been implemented?

The Assistant Director, Financial Services explained that whilst the

overspend remained an overspend position, it was worth noting that 12 months earlier it had stood at £1.4 million. Work had been carried out as part of setting the 2024-25 budget, including uplifting the fees and charges to schools when awarding the contract, to ensure the council was moving towards fully recovering its costs, as it should for a traded service.

This represented a move in the right direction, and the plan had been to continue that improvement through 2025-26 and 2026-27. While it had not been possible to include extensive planning packs, that gradual progression was helping to place the council in a stronger financial position. The Assistant Director, Financial Services went on to say that in terms of the contract changes, they were in the process of being implemented.

The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services explained that the team had reviewed the catering operational model to improve efficiency, prompted by market conditions and the loss of several school contracts, which were with academies that were shifting to national suppliers as they expanded. This loss highlighted the need to reassess the business model, which also helped identify and deliver savings.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £2.4m.
2. Note whilst there is a projected overspend, the Council expects to be able to manage this pressure during the year and return to a balanced position following mitigating actions. Should that not be possible the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2025/26 financial position.
3. Note the updated position of the Capital Programme.

Additional actions agreed at the meeting were:

- That information on the movement in number of units and number of savings associated with the Brampton Vale strategic acquisitions item would be provided to members of OSMB.

32. INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY FACILITIES

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Finance and Community Safety introduced the item explaining the facilities mentioned within the report supported a range of community activities which included but was not limited to, youth clubs, healthy eating clubs, community meetings, sports recreation and various adult learning centres. The Council set out to invest in several community buildings, initially over the next two years, though the investment of £600,000, which had been approved by Council. That investment would target the buildings with the greatest need, with a focus on health, safety, compliance, structure and integrity.

Officers from property and facility services, in collaboration with neighbourhood teams and community groups would define the scope of the work and ensure investment was aligned with sustainable occupancy and good governance. Other funding opportunities both internal and external will be sought to complement the existing funding.

The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services explained that the Black Hawk was located in Keppel Ward, Oakley Retreat was in Hoover, Clifton Learning Partnership was in Rotherham East, Meeting Place was in Greensborough, and the Artwork was in Keppel. This work was carried out in collaboration with the neighbourhood teams and community groups, with the aim of investing in these buildings. The focus was primarily on health and safety, as well as meeting some net zero requirements in terms of energy sustainability, to ensure these facilities remained sustainable for the communities that used them.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised.

Councillor Yasseen no objection in principle to investing in community buildings to improve usability. However, it was felt that the report lacked sufficient information, particularly regarding the locations of the buildings and the selection process. Councillor Yasseen welcomed the Chair's clarification on locations.

Councillor Yasseen queried why those specific buildings had been chosen for investment and not others, asking what criteria had been used to select them and how was equity being ensured across the borough in the selection process?

The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services explained the buildings were listed in the March budget report and selected based on health and safety needs, starting with the Black Hut, which had to be closed due to safety concerns.

The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services added that legacy condition surveys and input from neighbourhood teams were used to prioritise buildings. A new round of condition surveys is being commissioned to inform a long-term investment plan. Information on the criteria used to select the properties could be shared outside of the meeting.

Councillor Lelliott asked if all the buildings on the list were well-used or was the investment intended to increase their usage? The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services indicated it was for both reasons. Some buildings were underused due to disrepair, and fixing issues such as roof leaks would increase usage. The focus was on buildings with high demand and a potential for greater community use.

Councillor Brent asked if external works would be included at Oakley

Retreat, as the exterior was uninviting? The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services acknowledged the importance of external improvements and said these would be considered in the next phase of condition surveys, following the resolution of major internal issues.

The Vice Chair queried if the Black Hut had always been in council ownership? The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services confirmed the Black Hut was council-owned and admitted past leases lacked sufficient oversight. New leases would include stronger compliance and audit mechanisms.

In a follow-up question the Vice Chair asked what assurances could be given that buildings would be properly maintained going forward? It was requested that members be informed of condition surveys findings within their ward and that they be involved in the long-term investment planning in community facilities within their ward. The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services agreed to share condition surveys with members and involve them in discussions about their ward buildings. The Chair supported that recommendation and confirmed it would be added.

Councillor Tinsley asked if all of the buildings were council-owned and leased to groups, querying about other similar buildings with long leases? The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services confirmed the building were council-owned and leased and went on to acknowledge the importance of supporting groups with long leases who provided valuable services.

In response to a question by Councillor McKiernan, the Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services said the £600,000 budget was realistic based on the current knowledge however additional external funding for aspects such as energy efficiency would be sought to complement it.

The Chair asked how long the condition surveys would take? The Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services noted it was a vast estate, indicating the initial round would take twelve months, starting at the end of September/early October, followed by a five-year rolling programme covering twenty percent of the building annually.

The Vice Chair sought clarification that the additional recommendation seeking assurance that ward members were informed of the condition survey findings within their ward and were consulted regarding investment planning in community facilities within their ward would be included.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Approve the works set out in section 2.4 in relation to:
 - (a) The Black Hut;
 - (b) Oaklea Retreat;
 - (c) Clifton Learning Centre;
 - (d) The Meeting Place (Wingfield); and

(e) Artworks, Brook Hill

2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Property and Facilities Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety to amend the works as required within budget.
3. That the Assistant Director for Property and Facilities Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, would ensure that ward members were informed of the condition survey findings within their ward and were consulted regarding investment planning in community facilities within their ward.

Additional Actions were that:

- Information on the criteria used to select the properties could be shared outside of the meeting.
- An asset register of all Council buildings, including the wards they were located in be produced immediately and circulated to all Members.
- An update report be provided in 12 months to include the updated condition survey results, where available.

33. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2025-2028

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Finance and Community Safety introduced the item outlining the purpose and scope of the new Community Safety Strategy. He explained that the strategy was developed to guide the work of the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) over the next three years, with a focus on enhancing safety, protecting vulnerable individuals, and tackling serious violence and organised crime.

He emphasised that the strategy was built on an evidence-based approach, incorporating:

- Community safety data
- Partnership intelligence
- Extensive consultation with residents, stakeholders, and organisations

The strategy identified three core priorities:

1. Safer neighbourhoods
2. Tackling violence, abuse, and exploitation
3. Preventing offending and building resilience

Additionally, it included three cross-cutting themes:

- Online crime
- Service user voice
- Equality of access to services

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Finance and Community

Safety highlighted that the strategy aligned with statutory requirements and reflected local need. He noted that the SRP would report annually to the Council and OSMB to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised.

The Vice Chair queried why the wording under antisocial behaviour in the strategy was less robust than that used for combating alcohol and substance misuse, asking why stronger language to reflect a zero-tolerance approach wasn't included?

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Finance and Community Safety explained that the strategy aimed to address both actual antisocial behaviour and public perceptions of safety. It was noted that while some concerns were perception-based, the Council maintained a zero-tolerance stance on actual incidents.

The Head Of Service Community Safety and Regulatory Services clarified that the strategy included both quantitative data (e.g. incident reports) and qualitative data (e.g. perceptions of safety). It was emphasised that the partnership was committed to reducing antisocial behaviour through coordinated interventions and monitoring.

Councillor Lelliott expressed support at the inclusion of perception data in the strategy, arguing that it was essential to address both actual and perceived safety concerns to encourage public confidence in town centres.

Councillor Blackham expressed concern that the strategy might downplay real antisocial behaviour by focusing too much on perceptions. He cited examples such as quad bike nuisance and rural crime, which were clearly not perception based. In response the Chair acknowledged the challenge of distinguishing between perception and reality, noting that antisocial behaviour occurred across all wards and required the appropriate police response.

Councillor Yasseen queried why there were no baseline key performance indicators (KPIs) included in the strategy. The Head Of Service Community Safety and Regulatory Services explained that KPIs were being developed in action plans under each priority and would be reported annually to OSMB. In response to a follow-up question regarding how the consultation feedback influenced the priorities, it was confirmed that the consultation had influenced the inclusion of rural crime and perceptions of safety. In a subsequent question Councillor Yasseen asked why ward councillors were not more directly involved in the consultation? The Head Of Service Community Safety and Regulatory Services stated that emails had been sent to all elected members inviting input and offering to attend ward meetings, though acknowledged that not all members may have seen or responded.

The Vice Chair followed up his earlier point vigorously requesting that the strategy's wording on antisocial behaviour should be strengthened to match the tone used for other priorities, such as substance misuse. He proposed a formal recommendation to Cabinet to revise the wording. The Chair put the recommendation to the vote, and it was not carried.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Endorses the Safer Rotherham Partnership Strategy and recommends it to Council for approval.
2. Notes the requirement for scrutiny of the Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report, which is discharged by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
3. Approves the ongoing informal consultation to capture service user voices throughout the duration of the plan.

34. PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PATHWAYS TO WORK ECONOMIC INACTIVITY TRAILBLAZER PROGRAMME

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy opened the item by welcoming the opportunity to provide an update on the Pathways to Work programme, a government-funded initiative aimed at tackling economic inactivity.

He explained that the programme was part of a national pilot being delivered in nine regions, including South Yorkshire, and was designed to test new approaches to supporting people furthest from the labour market.

He emphasised that the programme aligned with Rotherham Council's Employment and Skills Strategy, which focused on:

1. Enabling more residents to progress into work.
2. Investing in residents' knowledge and skills.
3. Securing a resilient, diverse, and skilled workforce.

Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy highlighted that successful delivery depended on strong collaboration between the Council, employers, the NHS, DWP, voluntary and community sector organisations, and residents. Going to note that although the programme had experienced a slower-than-expected start, momentum was now building.

Key developments included:

- Commissioning of the Employment Solutions Team to deliver 138 job outcomes.
- Grant funding to VCSE organisations to deliver an additional 272 job outcomes.
- Establishment of a single point of contact (phone and email) for individuals and employers to access support.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy concluded by referencing the government's *Get Britain Working* White Paper, which criticised the current employment support system as outdated. The Pathways to Work programme, was Rotherham's response to that challenge, aiming to build a more integrated, accessible, and effective support system.

The Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport, Simon Moss introduced Fiona Fletcher, the newly appointed System Service Manager for the programme in Rotherham. He noted that Fiona had joined in August and would lead the local implementation of the programme, driving system change and integration across employment and health services.

Fiona Fletcher, the newly appointed System Service Manager for the Pathways to Work programme in Rotherham, provided a comprehensive update on the programme's implementation since she took up the post in early August.

It was explained that the programme was not a standalone employment service but aimed to drive system-wide change by integrating employment and health support services. Its goal was to make services more accessible and easier to navigate for residents who were unemployed, economically inactive, or in work but facing barriers.

The System Service Manager outlined the three key initiatives under the programme:

1. Economic Inactivity Trailblazer – supporting those furthest from the labour market.
2. Connect to Work – helping disabled people and those with health conditions into employment.
3. Health and Growth Accelerator – supporting people in work, especially those at risk of leaving due to ill health and improving occupational health for SMEs.

It was reported that:

- A triage system had been established with a dedicated phone line and email to direct individuals to the most appropriate support.
- A team of employment advisors had been recruited to deliver personalised support.
- Nine VCSE organisations were delivering engagement activities, and thirteen others had been commissioned to provide tailored employment support, including for neurodivergent individuals and

those with chronic health conditions.

The System Service Manager highlighted the scale of economic inactivity in Rotherham, noting that over 40,000 residents aged 16–64 was economically inactive, with around 18,000 households classified as workless. The importance of community engagement, employer activation, and targeted training, especially in sectors with high demand such as the foundational economy was highlighted.

The System Service Manager described efforts to:

- Develop employer-led training programmes.
- Promote inclusive recruitment.
- Create a single point of contact for employers.
- Commission wraparound services such as mental health and pain management support.

The System Service Manager also shared early performance data:

- Fifty-nine participants had become active in the programme.
- Seventy-nine were in the pipeline.
- Eighteen were undergoing quality checks.
- Nine were awaiting eligibility evidence.
- Twenty had agreed exit points, though many faced long-term health barriers.

The System Service Manager concluded by emphasising the importance of joined up working with the NHS, DWP, and neighbourhood teams, and committed to improving geographic coverage and equity in service delivery. The need for better visibility, including improvements to the Council's website and outreach through community centres was acknowledged.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised.

Councillor McKiernan began by seeking clarification on the phrase *"incentivising and de-risking inclusive recruitment"*, describing it as buzzwords. The System Service Manager explained that the phrase referred to supporting employers to recruit individuals with barriers to employment (e.g. young people, those on probation) by preparing candidates and offering wraparound support. This reduced perceived risks for employers.

In a subsequent question, Councillor McKiernan queried whether the programme duplicated existing services, noting his own past experience with similar support in Staffordshire. In response it was clarified that while similar services existed, they were often fragmented. The Pathways programme aimed to integrate and streamline support, ensuring individuals could access coordinated services throughout their employment journey.

In response to a question by Councillor Lelliott, the System Service Manager confirmed the programme was borough-wide and that mapping of service coverage was underway. She committed to sharing details of the commissioned VCSE organisations and their geographic reach. Assurance was then sought that deprived communities would not be left behind. The System Service Manager acknowledged the importance of ensuring equitable access and stated that a commissioning manager and monitoring officer would oversee this aspect. Councillor Lelliott then went on to query whether the commissioned VCSE organisations were suitable and appropriately distributed. In response the Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport added that while it would have been ideal to complete the mapping before commissioning, delays in government funding had impacted timelines. He assured members that geographic equity remained a priority.

Councillor Baggaley asked whether the programme would meet its target of 400 job outcomes by March 2026 along with requesting clarity on how progress would be monitored and reported. The System Service Manager stated that 410 job outcomes had already been commissioned (138 via Employment Solutions and 272 via VCSE organisations). She explained that while only 59 participants were currently active, many more were in the pipeline and progressing through the system. She committed to ongoing monitoring and reporting using Rotherham-specific data.

Councillor Yasseen questioned whether the item had come to scrutiny too early, suggesting a one-year interval would have been more appropriate. Along with asking whether the programme was targeting underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minority women. The System Service Manager acknowledged the early stage of delivery but highlighted the rapid progress made since August. It was confirmed that future commissioning would focus on harder-to-reach groups and that equity was central to the programme's design.

Councillor Brent asked whether the programme worked with schools to support young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). In response it was confirmed that while the programme targeted individuals aged 16+, it worked in partnership with enterprise coordinators and school-facing teams. The importance of recognising young people's skills and aspirations, even when formal qualifications were lacking was emphasised.

The Chair asked about the visibility of the programme and whether the Council's website was effective in promoting it. The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy acknowledged that the website needed improvement and committed to enhancing its accessibility and usefulness. The System Service Manager added that she planned to include event listings and contact information to make the service more visible and user-friendly.

Resolved: That progress on the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer and wider

Pathways to Work programme, would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on an annual basis.

Further actions that arose from discussions included:

- That details of the commissioned VCSE organisations and their geographic reach would be shared with members of OSMB.

35. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

The item was introduced by Chair, who explained that the annual report was scheduled to be presented to full council the following day. The Chair apologised for the delay in bringing the report to the Board, noting that it should have been submitted in July. It was confirmed that steps would be taken to ensure future reports were brought to the July meeting to allow members time to propose amendments.

The Chair thanked officers for their work in preparing the report and highlighted efforts to make it more accessible and readable for the general public, moving away from dense documentation toward clearer communication.

The Chair followed by reflecting on the volume and breadth of scrutiny activity over the past year. Noting that the overview and scrutiny function had considered the following:

- 84 substantive items considered across all commissions.
- 29 pre-decision scrutiny reports,
- 7 workshops,
- 5 reviews, and
- 2 call-ins.
- 26 off-agenda briefings and
- 1 site visit.

He emphasised the strong engagement with partner officers, the public, and the Youth Cabinet, and expressed pride in the collective work of all scrutiny commissions, Health, Improving Lives, and Improving Places.

The Chair invited any chairs or vice-chairs of the commissions to contribute to the presentation of the report at full council, should they wish to do so.

No further questions or comments were raised, and the Board unanimously approved the report for submission to full council.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

1. Acknowledged and considered the content of the report; and
2. Approved the Annual Report for consideration by Council on Wednesday 10 September 2025.

36. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme. The Governance Manager provided an update regarding the Spotlight on life-saving equipment and related bylaws. Noting that the review group had met with the Assistant Director a couple of months ago to request further information. A timescale of a couple of months had been determined adequate for the information to be sourced. This would be followed up now that the summer recess had concluded.

Councillor McKiernan sought clarification that members of the Improving Places Select Commission would be invited to attend OSMB to consider the Selective Licensing Policy as part of OSMB's pre-decision scrutiny work? The Governance Manager confirmed that this was due to be considered at the next Cabinet meeting, therefore members of IPSC would be invited to join the OSMB meeting scheduled for the 8 October 20205.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

37. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

Improving Places Select Commission Update:

The draft Housing Strategy 2025–2030 and the Neighbourhoods Plan was reviewed at the meeting last week along with looking back at the previous Selective Licensing Scheme.

Items for the next meeting included the draft Housing Strategy Action Plan and the Neighbourhoods Plan. It was noted that IPSC would also usually cover flooding and allotments, however one of those items may be postponed to a future meeting due to the length of the last session.

The IPSC also welcomed the new Governance Advisor, Kristianne Thorogood, who would be taking over responsibility for supporting the Commission from Barbel Gale, Governance Manager.

Improving Lives Select Commission Update:

Since the last meeting, one ILSC session had been held. The Commission received the Children and Young Persons Annual Outturn Performance Report. Members were satisfied with the progress made to date, but requested further information on:

- Engagement levels with Family Help
- A summary of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, was requested by the Commission

It also considered the draft Elective Home Education Policy in pre-decision scrutiny, ahead of its presentation to Cabinet. Members were generally happy with the policy but requested further information on three specific items. Written responses were provided to any additional

questions raised during the meeting.

The service also considered how flexi-schooling should sit alongside elective home education. A further update on the strategy was requested to be provided annually or earlier if significant changes occurred.

In April, ILSC considered the No Family Left Behind Strategy. Although this jumped back in time, it was relevant as several items came to fruition after the July meeting. At that time, members made several recommendations, all of which were later incorporated. Since then, the strategy was revised further and reviewed by Improving Lives ahead of Cabinet consideration.

The Chair noted that several commission members, had attended bespoke trauma training in John Smith's Room, which was very informative.

At the next ILSC meeting (scheduled for next week), an annual update from CAMHS, including a separate neurodiversity report was expected. This would be the first CAMHS update to the Commission since it moved under Improving Lives from Health Select Commission. Members of the Health Select Commission had been invited to attend this item due to its crossover relevance.

Health Select Commission Update:

The Chair explained there was no report from HSC as both the Chair and Vice-Chair were unavailable. Officers would not be asked to deliver the report, and it was deferred.

The Chair explained that the Chief Executive had asked that these updates be provided as a briefing note in the agenda pack going forward. The intention of this was to improve openness and transparency. Before responding to the Chief Executive about this the Chair wanted to seek members views on the following:

- Did members feel a short-written briefing was appropriate?
- Would members prefer to rely on the minutes instead?

The Chair went on to explain that it was not expected to be a lengthy document, just a brief summary and the Governance Advisors would be available to support with this if needed.

38. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions September 2025 to November 2025.

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Governance Manager to walk members through the forward plan for September to November 2025. The purpose was to identify which key decisions should be

scheduled for pre-decision scrutiny at the next OSMB meeting on 8 October 2025.

It was agreed that the Selective Licensing Policy would be considered and that members of the Improving Places Select Commission would be invited to join that meeting.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

39. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair explained there were two main items considered last week. They covered the franchising of buses and the associated implementation plan.

The first phase of implementation was set to begin in Sheffield and Doncaster, followed by Barnsley and Rotherham, and then further developments in Sheffield. A small report was submitted to the committee on this topic.

The other item was the Economic Inactivity trailblazing initiative. This had been presented from a view of what was happening across South Yorkshire.

During the meeting, the main questions focused on Doncaster Airport. A decision was made that morning by the Combined Authority regarding South Yorkshire Airport. The key scrutiny questions directed at the Mayor were about the airport and the feasibility study.

The Mayor gave assurances that he believed the feasibility study was fit for purpose. He felt the targets outlined in the study were achievable. An independent body had conducted the study.

Both the South Yorkshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the South Yorkshire Audit Committee had received a joint presentation on the report prior to the Overview and scrutiny meeting. He concluded his update by indicating it was a comprehensive report.

40. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

41. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.