

**COUNCIL MEETING
10th September, 2025**

Present:- The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Rukhsana Ismail) (in the Chair); Councillors Rashid, Adair, Ahmed, Alam, Bacon, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Bennett-Sylvester, Blackham, Bower, Brent, A. Carter, C. Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clarke, Z. Collingham, Cowen, Cusworth, Duncan, Elliott, Fisher, Garnett, Hall, Harper, Harrison, Hughes, Hussain, Jackson, Jones, Keenan, Knight, Lelliott, Marshall, Mault, McKiernan, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Ryalls, Sheppard, Stables, Steele, Sutton, Tarmey, Taylor, Thorp, Tinsley, Williams and Yasseen.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

50. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following the death of Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Kent, all present joined the Mayor in observing a minute's silence.

The Mayor was delighted to announce that Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre, AESSEAL and Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust had recently been granted the 2025 Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award. The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust had also received the 2025 Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award.

The award recognised organisations who pledged, demonstrated, and advocated their support for the Defence community. The Mayor offered her congratulations to the charities and employers in Rotherham who had received these outstanding awards.

Members joined the Mayor in congratulating Councillor Monk and her family on the safe arrival of a baby boy.

The Mayor had recently attended the Rotherham Show and praised all those involved in planning and delivering such a wonderful event. A full list of Mayoral Engagements was set out in Appendix A of the Mayor's Letter.

51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Beck, Beresford, T. Collingham and Monk.

52. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 16th July, 2025.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meetings of Council held on 16th July, 2025, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

53. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which set out the petition that had been received since the last meeting. The petition asked the Council to install speed humps on Melton Green, West Melton, Rotherham and it had 67 valid signatures. Mr. Barksby, the Lead Petitioner, attended the meeting and gave a speech explaining the asks of the petition. The petition would be responded to by the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment within 10 working days of the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the relevant Strategic Director be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday, 24th September 2025.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to record.

55. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There was one public question from Mr. Ashraf who asked:

Given the South Yorkshire Pension Authority's investments in arms companies and Israeli government bonds, and the ICJ conclusion that Israel is committing plausible genocide in Gaza, will Rotherham Borough Council urgently survey its workers and pension scheme members on divesting these holdings to avoid complicity in war crimes, as demanded by thousands of local tax paying residents and scheme members?

The Leader thanked Mr. Ashraf for his question and stated that most in the room shared his concerns. However, case law from 2020 said that funds invested in pensions fund were not to be considered public money, but rather effectively held in trust to pay pensions. In the Palestine Solidarity Campaign case, the Supreme Court held that it was not appropriate for political preferences to take precedence over what was

required under the fiduciary duty which was about maximising the return for pension holders.

There were some circumstances under which the Pensions Authority could use Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues when making investment decisions and the Leader committed to writing to the Pensions Authority to see what action, if any, could be taken. He could not commit, however, to undertaking a survey of the workforce as it was not appropriate to ask them to take a view on something that might not be possible.

In his supplementary, Mr. Ashraf asked how Rotherham Council would actively gather and formally represent the views of Council employees and pensioners to South Yorkshire Pension Authority to ensure the deeply held opposition to investments, that were actively complicit in the live streamed war crimes and genocide, would directly shape South Yorkshire Pension Authority's 2026 Strategy Review rather than being lost in the general consultation.

56. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public.

57. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader was invited to present his statement. He referenced the developments and challenges faced in relation to Liberty Steel and the nearly 1,500 people across the Borough and wider sub-region employed by the business. The announcement by the Government that they would take indirect control of the steelworks was pleasing. However, this was time-limited, and the Leader stated that it was essential that a long-term solution was identified to ensure the continued success of the steelworks. He confirmed that he had written to the Secretary of State along with the South Yorkshire Mayor and Leader of Sheffield City Council. Assurances were required from Government about a long-term solution.

The Council had held its annual Social Value event in July, bringing together partners from the public and voluntary sector as well as over 70 representatives from the private sector. The successes of the social value initiatives were celebrated along with the impacts on the Borough such as employing local people and providing training and skills. The Council's procurements team publicised upcoming contracts and advised firms on how they could access those opportunities.

An initiative had been launched to support the retail sector in the Borough's principal towns with £270,000 of potential investment. Shop Unit Business Grants of up to £25,000 would be available to help high street businesses improve their overall look, feel and vibrancy.

The Leader congratulated those who had received their A-Level and GCSE results over the summer. Early analysis showed that A-Level students had achieved a pass rate of 97.6 % for grades A to E and, with more than 3,000 students collecting GCSE results, more than 60 % of those had received passing grades in English and Maths. Work continued to do better.

Work continued at Thrybergh Country Park and the Leader echoed the words of the Mayor in celebrating the success of the Rotherham Show. Over 95,000 visitors attended, and it continued to be the largest free outdoor cultural festival in the north of England.

The Leader of the Majority Opposition Group, Councillor Z. Collingham, was invited to respond to the statement. He echoed the Leader's comments on Liberty Steel and welcomed the Government's intervention in taking on the wages and costs whilst a buyer was sought. He welcomed the representations made by the Leader. Councillor Z. Collingham also welcomed the announcement of the funding for Doncaster Sheffield Airport which he said was vital for the region.

The inability of the Council to resume a full programme of bin collections was referenced, particularly in relation to garden waste which residents had paid for and were not getting. Councillor Z. Collingham asked why the Council was still not able to source the necessary staff and what making amends actually meant.

Councillor Z. Collingham also thanked all those involved in the Rotherham Show, particularly the Assistant Director, Polly Hamilton. He noted that hundreds of attendees had engaged with the Conservatives campaign regarding installing solar panels on rooftops and brownfield sites, not greenfield sites. Following this, he asked if the Leader had had any further engagement with the Whitestone Solar Farm proposals given local Members were firmly against it.

In concluding his statement, Councillor Z. Collingham asked the Leader if he was prouder to be associated with the former Deputy Prime Minister who did not pay her taxes or the Labour Council Leader who thought that young girls in Rotherham were white trash.

The Leader was invited to respond to Councillor Z. Collingham and thanked him for his support in relation to the re-opening of Doncaster Sheffield airport. There was still some way to go before the airport could re-open and discussions had to be had with the landholder around the lease. It was essential that the right terms were agreed to ensure good value for the taxpayer.

In relation to the bin situation, the Leader stated that some progress had been made over the summer and garden waste collections had resumed although not as frequently as he would have liked. In relation to sourcing staff, the Leader confirmed that a permanent recruitment process was

underway but that was taking longer than expected. There were particular challenges around recruiting HGV drivers, but this was not a recent issue. The lack of availability of agency staff had been a challenge. It was hoped that the situation would improve in the next couple of weeks. In relation to what making amends meant, this could not be known until the extent of the disruption was known. The plan was to get through the challenging period, get the service running as it should and then make amends appropriately and commensurately.

With regards to the Whitestone Solar Farm, the Leader confirmed that he had not had any further direct contact on the matter. He had had conversations with officers about how the Council would fulfil its statutory duties in responding to a national planning decision.

The Leader stated he was proud of Angela Rayner for her work on restoring Council housing and moving away from selling it off under the Right to Buy Scheme. He was proud that she and Jim McMahon MP had restored the principle of funding councils based on need, ensuring that money was provided to those that most needed it. He acknowledged that people make mistakes, and Angela Rayner had had to live with the consequence of those mistakes. The Leader concluded by saying that he was proud of the Labour Government that worked in a progressive way to support communities meaningfully, after they were let down and betrayed for the course of the previous 14 years.

Questions on the Leader's statement were invited from all other Members. Councillor A. Carter echoed the comments made in relation to Liberty Steel. He specifically asked about what support had been given in relation to the apprentices that were due to start at the steelworks but had now been lost. In relation to the Shop Unit Business Grants, Councillor Carter asked if the Leader shared his concerns that smaller district centres would miss out on investment? A question was also asked about the level of public investment required in Doncaster Sheffield Airport, the implications of competition law and the risk to Council Tax payers. Finally, Councillor Carter raised concerns regarding the communication with residents who did not use email in relation to the Garden Waste Collection issues.

In response, the Leader stated that support had been offered by the providers to those 30 people who were supposed to be starting their apprenticeship, and he understood that they were now largely resolved. In relation to the Shop Unit Business Grants, the Leader confirmed that there was only so much money available and that would be prioritised accordingly. He did not believe the grants would disadvantage other businesses but, if successful, the Council would want to look at how it could be extended to businesses across the Borough. The Leader stated that the risk to Rotherham Council Tax payers in relation to the airport was very limited. The region's Leaders had been given assurances that all actions were in accordance with competition laws. On bins, the Leader apologised that some residents had still not received the relevant information. Email users should have received two emails and the 8,000

service users who did not use email should have received a letter. If there were any individual issues Councillor Carter wanted to raise with the Leader, the Leader would pick those up.

Councillor Reynolds also asked about the bin collection issues and stated that he had not heard an explanation as to why it had happened, just excuses. He also stated that the South Yorkshire Council needed to get the airport situation sorted.

In response, the Leader stated that the terms and conditions of the refuse collectors had to be amended to ensure they were equitable. Those emptying the household waste bins were on different contracts to those emptying the recycling bins and this was not appropriate. The Service also could not continue to rely on agency staff. There were also new legal responsibilities imposed on the Council. As a result, a review was undertaken and changes made.

Councillor Bacon referenced the investment in businesses and the need for businesses to operate in a crime-free environment. He asked why the Council was allowing the Safer Rotherham Partnerships Strategy to only talk about perceptions of anti-social behaviour as opposed to tackling it. He also asked if this failure showed that a weak Leader created weak times for residents.

The Leader stated that perceptions of anti-social behaviour was a legitimate thing for the Council to be worried about. The realities of crime and anti-social behaviour needed to be tackled with the best information that the Council had, and it was important to make sure that that the Council was talking to people and helping to make sure they were not fearful when they did not need to be.

Councillor Tinsley referred to the Shop Unit Business Grants and asked if it was fully subscribed. He also asked if it would disadvantage small businesses who did not have the resources to fill out grant applications.

The Leader confirmed that there had been a huge demand for the Shop Front Grants. Applications would continue to be accepted until the deadline and then the money allocated to ensure value for money. As stated previously, the Council would assess the effectiveness of the scheme before deciding on any further schemes.

Councillor Ball asked how much money Liberty Steel owed in business rates and whether this had been written off. He also asked why the Leader had broken off his quarterly meeting with Tata and Liberty.

The Leader confirmed he would provide a written response in relation to the question on business rates. He did not know what meetings Councillor Ball was referring to as he continued to have productive conversations with management on site.

Councillor Steele echoed the positive comments on the Rotherham Show.

58. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Consideration was given to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2024/25. It provided an overview of activity undertaken by Scrutiny over the last year through key lines of inquiry, evidence gathering, and findings leading to recommendations. In addition, it also provided a selection of the year's achievement of Scrutiny as a supplement to full agendas and minutes of Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the three Select Commission meetings throughout the year.

Councillor Steele thanked officers for their hard work in supporting Scrutiny. He noted that throughout 2024/25, Scrutiny had considered 84 substantive items, there had been 29 pre-decision reports scrutinised, 2 decisions had been called in, 7 workshops had been held, one site visit conducted and there had been 26 off-agenda briefings. He also noted that the Improving Lives Select Commission had co-opted 3 external members.

Full details of details of the work carried out were set out in the Annual Report attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Steele thanked Councillor Pitchley, former Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission and Councillor Knight, former Vice-Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission, for the work they carried out. He reaffirmed that Scrutiny should be a cross-party matter, and it had to be non-political.

Resolved:- That the report be noted.

Mover: Councillor Steele

Seconder: Councillor Bacon

59. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

Consideration was given to the Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25 which brought together in one document a summary of the work undertaken. The production of the report complied with current best practice for Audit Committees allowing it to demonstrate how it had fulfilled its terms of reference and shared its achievements with the Council and served as a useful reminder to the organisation of the role of the Committee in providing assurance about the Council's governance, risk management and financial and business controls.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had previously issued guidance to local authorities to help ensure that Audit Committees operated effectively. The guidance recommended that Audit Committees should report annually on how they have discharged their responsibilities.

The CIPFA guidance was revised and re-issued in 2022. As a result, the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference were updated and agreed at Audit Committee in March 2023, and were approved by full Council on 19 July 2023. A copy of the Annual Report of the Audit Committee was attached at Appendix 1. The Audit Committee's Terms of Reference were included as Appendix C of the Annual Report for information. Minor amendments had been made to them to change the reference to the new Global Internal Audit Standards (UK Public Sector).

In moving the report, Councillor Baggaley noted the training programme undertaken by members of the Committee. He thanked officers for their work in supporting the committee and Thilina DeZoysa from the External Auditor, Grant Thornton, for his work and engagement with the Committee.

Resolved:- That the Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25 be approved.

Mover: Councillor Baggaley

Seconded: Councillor Elliott

60. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR AUGHTON AND SWALLOWNEST

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Aughton and Swallowneast as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy. An update report had been provided as part of the agenda and each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Pitchley moved the report and highlighted the first 2 Ward priorities. The first was to develop and support initiatives that would improve health and wellbeing and tackle poverty. Work done included working with all junior and infant schools on projects such as Democracy Week and enhanced reading services. Alongside this, gaps in youth provision had been identified and neighbourhood facilities improved and used to support community activities. The second priority was to develop and support initiatives around crime and community safety. Work included improvements to road safety outside Aston Fence School and on Chesterfield Way.

Councillor Taylor seconded the report and highlighted the last 2 Ward priorities. In relation to developing and supporting initiatives to improve the environment and neighbourhood, work included walkabouts with the Parish Council to connect with local residents and initiatives such as litter picks, community skip days, planting trees etc. The fourth priority was to support local communities to come together and celebrate local and cultural heritage. Work included funding social activities such as Aston Carnival, Ulley Brass Band concerts and Aston Cricket Club. Funding for a sensory bench at Ulley Country Park had been provided and support

provided to local schools and Swallownest Bowling Club for inter-generational projects. Councillor Taylor was proud of the work that had been done in the Ward to engage with schools.

Councillor Pitchley and Councillor Taylor thanked the Neighbourhoods Team and residents for their support.

Resolved:- That the update report be noted.

61. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR BOSTON CASTLE

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Boston Castle as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy. An update report had been provided as part of the agenda and each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Alam moved the report and stated the Ward priorities as set out in the report. He explained how the priorities were agreed and how they supported the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy. Working in partnership was key, as was cross-party working. Councillor Alam detailed the progress that had been made so far in achieving the Ward priorities. Extra CCTV had been purchased and funding had been provided to Rotherham Hindu Community and BME Young Carers for Diwali events.

Councillor Hussain stated that, as a new elected Independent Councillor, he had experienced some difficulties in accessing Council services and getting issues dealt with. He noted that concerns raised with him centred on crime and, specifically rising gun crime. He did, however, feel honoured to support his residents and make a difference.

Councillor Yasseen highlighted the investment from the Towns and Villages Fund for work on Wellgate. She also highlighted the work done in community areas, such as planting trees at Broom Valley School. A defibrillator had also been funded. Councillor Yasseen specifically thanked the Friends of Groups that operated in Boston Castle Ward as they played a huge role in delivering activities and protecting the areas. Councillor Yasseen was proud to have been involved in the Save Herringthorpe Playing Fields campaign, the campaigns regarding Selective Licensing and cycles lanes, and work on homeless solutions. Finally, Councillor Yasseen thanked those involved in efforts to improve East Herringthorpe Cemetery, specifically Hajid Zaheer, and those involved in the campaign for peace in Palestine.

Resolved:- That the update report be noted.

62. NOTICE OF MOTION - ROTHERHAM COUNCIL WELCOMES THE ORGREAVE INQUIRY - AFFIRMING COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, TRANSPARENCY, AND COMMUNITY HEALING

It was moved by Councillor Steele and seconded by Councillor Clarke that:

Summary/Background:

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council acknowledges the historic significance of the Orgreave events and the need for a comprehensive inquiry to address longstanding concerns within the community. This resolution expresses the Council's unequivocal support for the Orgreave inquiry, outlines the historical context, articulates the reasons for supporting such an investigation, and reaffirms the Council's commitment to justice, healing, and reconciliation within the Borough and beyond.

The events at Orgreave on 18th June 1984 were a pivotal moment during the UK miners' strike of 1984–1985. On that day, striking miners assembled near the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire, protesting against pit closures and the wider policies threatening their livelihoods and community stability. They were met by thousands of police officers, on foot, in riot gear and on horseback. The confrontation between the miners and police culminated in scenes of violence, mass arrests, and accusations of misconduct, which have echoed through the decades since.

For years, campaigners, former miners and their families have sought a full independent inquiry into the policing and subsequent legal proceedings at Orgreave. Concerns have focused on issues including:

- Allegations of excessive use of force by police toward striking miners
- Claims of wrongful arrest and prosecution
- Accusations of evidence fabrication and perjury
- The broader context of state intervention in industrial disputes
- The lasting impact on the wellbeing and reputation of those involved and their communities.

Rotherham Council's Position

As a Local Authority directly affected by the legacy of the miners' strike and its aftermath, Rotherham Council has a moral and civic responsibility to support all efforts aimed at truth and reconciliation. The Council recognises that the events at Orgreave were not isolated, but part of a larger narrative affecting many mining communities, including those within Rotherham Borough. The Council, therefore, welcomes the announcement of an Orgreave inquiry. We stand in solidarity with all those seeking answers, believing strongly that a transparent investigation can help to:

- Establish the facts surrounding the events of 18th June 1984
- Ensure accountability where wrongdoing is found
- Restore public faith in our policing and legal systems Supporting the Community.

The Council recognises that the trauma experienced at Orgreave and throughout the miners' strike continues to impact on local residents. Many families lost livelihoods, suffered legal consequences, or faced social ostracism as a direct result of their involvement.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Officially welcome and support the Orgreave inquiry.
2. Encourage full co-operation from all relevant parties, including local residents, former miners, police, and legal representatives.
3. Work with neighbouring authorities in South Yorkshire to co-ordinate efforts and share best practice in supporting affected communities.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

63. NOTICE OF MOTION - LISTEN TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES ON MIGRANT ACCOMMODATION

It was moved by Councillor Z. Collingham and seconded by Councillor Bacon that:

The Council notes:

2025 has been the worst year ever for small boat crossings, with over 25,000 people crossing the Channel this year alone. Since July 2024, over 50,000 people have crossed the Channel.

The increasing pressures faced by local communities, both across the country and recently in Rotherham, where hotels are designated for use as migrant accommodation without proper consultation or local input.

The successful High Court judgment granting Epping Forest District Council a temporary injunction to prevent such use of the Bell Hotel, and the current uncertainty as to whether this use can be lawful.

The need to balance the interests of migrants needing to be accommodated nationally alongside the wellbeing and concerns of local residents, including in relation to the public benefits available to asylum seekers placed in Rotherham.

The Council believes:

That local communities must be properly consulted before significant decisions are made that impact local services, housing, and community cohesion.

That the use of local hotels as long-term accommodation for migrants is not a sustainable solution and places disproportionate pressures on local infrastructure and services.

That local councils, as the democratic voice of their communities, should have a say in how accommodation needs are managed and delivered.

That the public benefits available to asylum seekers from the Council must address their basic needs, rather than support leisure pursuits like dinky days out and gym sessions, if residents are to have confidence in the proper use of taxpayers' money.

This Council resolves:

1. To ask the Group Leaders to jointly write to the Home Office:
 - a) Expressing this Council's concerns about the past use of hotels in our area for migrant accommodation and to request full consultation with this Council on any future decisions.
 - b) Requesting immediate action from the Government to address the impact of illegal migrants and asylum seekers on our communities, including:
 - reviewing current asylum seeker housing placements in the authority.
 - deporting failed asylum seekers and illegal immigrants without lawful reason to remain.
 - further increasing funding for the Immigration and Asylum Tribunal to speed up claim determinations.
 - developing a sustainable, properly planned, and community consulted approach to housing migrants, that considers alternatives to hotels such as immigration centres and former or repurposed MOD sites.
 - c) Requesting uniform national guidelines on asylum seeker benefits that focus such support on essential need, and not on providing leisure opportunities that exceed those available to low-income working residents.
2. To ask the three Members of Parliament representing parts of Rotherham Borough to co-sign a letter to the Home Secretary and Justice Secretary supporting the above measures.

3. To ask the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Council's legal team, to review the Council's readiness to seek an injunction to prevent the use of local hotels for migrant accommodation in future, should this be proposed before the legality of this use is determined.
4. To review any available data on the use of the Rothercard scheme in relation to the uses cited by The Sun newspaper on 10th August 2025 and refer this data to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) for them to consider whether any amendment should be made to the Rothercard scheme to restore public confidence.

On being put to the vote, the Motion fell.

64. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7th July, 2025.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked a question in relation to Minute Nos. 31 and 32 regarding the public realm works on Effingham Street and the Town Centre Health Hub. He asked for clarity on what work was being done in terms of ensuring quality in the works. This was due to improvements on Bridgegate and College Street now looking grubby, only a few years after completion. He also asked if the 2 schemes could be linked in order to make parking more accessible.

Councillor Williams confirmed that he would respond in writing to the comments made about Bridgegate and College Street. In terms of accessible parking, he stated that the new offer of free parking for 2 hours should help alleviate some of those issues.

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7th July, 2025, be received.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

65. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Baggaley

Seconder: Councillor Elliott

66. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Councillor Baker-Rogers provided an update on the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board. It was noted that over 1000 baby pack had been delivered and the Giving Your Child the Best Start in Life Guide was available. Changing Places had been installed at Rother Valley and Thrybergh Country Parks and the Mental Health Community Connected

initiative had been launched. Rotherham Show had been a huge success and Reclaim the Night would be back for 2025. Councillor Baker-Rogers thanked all Members, officers, partners and residents from making the achievements possible.

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

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

67. LICENSING BOARD AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Hughes

Seconder: Councillor Garnett

68. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Mault

Seconder: Councillor Jackson

69. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were 2 questions:

1. Councillor Yasseen: The South Yorkshire Pension Fund states that it has an ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) Policy. Can the Council's Pension Representative clarify what this policy means in practice and whether they have ever raised or spoken on any ESG related issues at the Fund?

Councillor Sutton, the Council's Representative on South Yorkshire Pension's Authority, stated that the Pensions Authority maintained a responsible investment policy detailing its approach to its ESG responsibilities and provided quarterly updates on activity in this area which were available on the Authority's website. Councillor Sutton confirmed that following the concerns raised she had communicated these to the Authority.

The Authority regularly engaged with Border to Coast as its fund manager where it saw issues in relation to specific investments and had done so over particular investments made by PIMCO, a manager within the Multi-Asset Credit Fund. The Authority and Border to Coast had been disappointed by the lack of detailed insight and transparency provided by PIMCO and continued to follow this up and seek clear answers to the questions raised.

The Authority was, however, limited as to what it could do given the fiduciary duty placed on it, which was as set out by the Supreme Court, and meant it had to place primacy on delivering in the financial interests of scheme members. Further, in line with Government policy, investments were held in pooled funds meaning that SYPA could not act on issues in isolation from its pooling partners.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen asked if anybody, Councillor Sutton or any other local authority representative on the Pension Fund, had raised concerns about the investment into Israeli arms and bombs.

Councillor Sutton confirmed that these questions had been raised at authority level and were still in discussion.

2. At the last meeting, the Pension Representative didn't understand my question (I was speaking English) and avoided it. The SYPA of which Rotherham Council is a member has invested nearly £2 million in Israeli bonds and £117million in arms firms. With over-whelming evidence of Israeli war crimes and genocide, what have you done to challenge this under the ESG policy?

Councillor Sutton, the Council's Representative on South Yorkshire Pension's Authority, stated that, as indicated in answer to the previous question and questions raised at previous meetings, she continued to raise Councillor Yasseen's concerns and those of other Members.

While the Pensions Authority had and continued to raise questions about investments which were made by an external investment manager within the terms of their mandate, the Authority could not act in isolation to sell any specific stocks. In relation to investment in arms companies, these companies were acting under the terms of licences from the relevant government and even if the Pensions Authority could act in isolation to sell such investments, it would be legally unreasonable to do so given the companies were acting within the specific sanction of the relevant government.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen asked Councillor Sutton if the Pension's Authority would have taken a different view if the arms investments had been Russian and were being used to attack the innocent people in Ukraine.

Councillor Sutton stated that she could not respond to hypothetical questions and certainly not without speaking to the Authority first.

70. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 32 questions:

1. Councillor Bacon: Will the Council conduct a full review into the way it handled changes to the way bin crews work, which reportedly led to chaos in the collection of household waste?

Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, firstly thanked residents for their patience and understanding in relation to the Garden Waste Collection Service issues. She did not accept that there had been chaos in the collection of household waste as Councillor Bacon had suggested. The collection of household waste had been prioritised. As the situation had not yet concluded, Councillor Marshall stated that she was not in a position to commit to a review.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bacon stated that the Council was not interested in learning lessons from its failures to do the basic jobs right. He asked if the Cabinet member would be issuing a proper refund to the residents who had not received the service they had paid for.

Councillor Marshall explained that the original question had asked for a review into the collection of household waste, not garden waste. She confirmed that the Council would look into some form of recompense for the Garden Waste Collection issues.

2. Councillor Thorp: Would the Council ever consider or comply with a request from the Government to sell off allotments to use for building new houses as a very concerned constituent of mine is very worried RMBC would just say yes to any Government request to do so?

Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, stated that the Council had not had any request from Government to sell off any allotments and, by statutory protections, the Council had no intention to identify any allotment land for other purposes.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp asked would the Council sell them if the Government asked them to.

Councillor Marshall explained that the sale of an allotment had to go through a rigorous protocol, including consultation with the National Allotment Society and through the planning process.

3. Councillor Thorp: RMBC spent a fortune laying new pedestrian walk ways in the Town Centre, trying to improve the visual effect for visitors. Then along comes someone who needs to get to underground utilities,

but is there any care in what is put down, the simple answer is no. Why spend this money if you do not keep up its appearance.

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, stated that he shared the frustration. However, the Council's Highways Team had protected the recent resurfacing works in the Town Centre against any utility company carrying out excavation works in the roads and footways. However, in the Legislation that governed this matter, exemptions were provided for utilities companies to carry out emergency works and provide a new connection or supply to a new customer. Any planned works or emergency works delivered on the adopted highway by a utility company required approval in accordance with the Street Works and Roadworks Permit Scheme and all utilities companies were required to restore the highway to its original state.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp stated that, outside the Heart Foundation Shop, around 10 flagstones had been pulled up and tarmac had been put down in its place. This had happened in other areas throughout the Town Centre. Councillor Thorp asked Councillor Williams to do something about it.

Councillor Williams confirmed that he would raise the issues with the relevant Service.

4. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can you please confirm the asylum seeker qualification was not an addition of the 2023 update of Rothercard and had been in place since the last formal review in 2008?

Councillor Read, Leader of the Council, stated that this was the case. The asylum seeker qualification was not a recent addition and had been in place since at least 2008.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that since 2008, the Conservatives, BNP, UKIP and Reform had had a near continuous presence on the Council. He asked if the Leader was aware of any questions from their parties on the eligibility criteria for Rothercard since 2008.

Councillor Read stated that, as far as he was aware, there has been no mention of it from any Member of any of those groups over that entire period of time.

5. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can you please confirm the number of Conservative Councillors who volunteered to join the Rothercard Working Group ahead of its update in 2023?

Councillor Read, Leader of the Council, confirmed that there was no record of Conservative Members seeking to be members of that Working Group.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if the Leader would agree with him that the Conservatives had had full opportunity to help shape the look of Rothercard. He noted that no Conservatives had come forward to join the new Review Group created following the local elections in 2024.

Councillor Read stated that the cross-party working led by former Deputy Leader, Councillor Sheppard, on the Rothercard Review had been a really good piece of work. Those opportunities were absolutely there, both through those Working Group arrangements and through Scrutiny arrangements. If Members did not take them, that was their responsibility.

6. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Who chaired the January 13th 2023 OSMB meeting where the new Rothercard scheme was scrutinised, were any Members from the same Party in attendance and can you give a summary of questions asked please?

Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, explained that the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board took place on 19th January, 2023, and not 13th January, 2023. The minutes of the meeting on 19th January indicated that, whilst the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board at the time was Councillor Clark, the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Tom Collingham, after apologies were received from Councillor Clark.

Councillor Tim Baum-Dixon was the only Elected Member present from the same party (Conservative) as the Chair, Councillor Tom Collingham.

The following attendances information was provided:

- Councillor Joanna Baker-Rogers, Member, Attendance: Present - Labour
- Councillor Sheila Cowen - Member - Attendance: Present - Labour
- Councillor Wendy Cooksey - Member - Attendance: Present - Labour
- Councillor Lyndsay Pitchley - Member - Attendance: Apologies - Labour
- Councillor Ken Wyatt - Member - Attendance: Present - Labour
- Councillor Taiba Yasseen - Member - Attendance: Apologies - Labour
- Councillor Adam Tinsley - Member - Attendance: Expected - Conservative

- Councillor Tim Baum-Dixon - Member - Attendance: Present - Conservative
- Councillor Adam Carter - Member - Attendance: Apologies - Liberal Democrat
- Councillor Robert Elliott - Member - Attendance: Present - Non-Aligned (Independent)

A summary of the questions asked was also provided.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if it would be reasonable, in Councillor Steele's opinion, to say that not only did the Conservative Group have full opportunity to scrutinise Rothercard but actually due to the Vice-Chair facilitating the meeting, lead the Scrutiny?

He, therefore, asked if it would be reasonable to accept that the Members of OSMB who were silent, consented?

Councillor Steele stated that he would not make comments on what people chose to do in a meeting. He did think it was appropriate for everyone to stake appropriate action and involved themselves in the decisions made.

7. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Full Council on 1st March, 2023 approved Cabinet minutes approving the new Rothercard scheme, how many Members of the current Conservative Group were present and what questions did they ask of the scheme, especially regards eligibility?

Councillor Read, Leader of the Council, explained that the following current Conservative Group Members were present:

- Councillor Joshua Bacon
- Councillor Simon Ball
- Councillor Tim Baum-Dixon
- Councillor Sophie Castledine-Dack
- Councillor Tom Collingham
- Councillor Zachary Collingham
- Councillor David Fisher
- Councillor Greg Reynolds
- Councillor Adam Tinsley

None of them raised any questions on this matter.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that whilst Rothercard was not there to be voted on as recommendation, Members were able to table questions and speak to the minutes. There were several Conservative members present who were at the

meeting today. He asked if the Leader agreed with him that it was reasonable to take their silence then as consent?

Councillor Read stated that he thought there was no reason to believe that that was not the case.

8. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: Can you please confirm that during his time as MP for Rother Valley that Mr. Alexander Stafford regularly contacted RMBC about Council matters and what representations did he make regards the highly publicised Rothercard scheme, especially given the role of Conservative Councillors in its scrutiny?

Councillor Read, Leader of the Council, explained that the former MP sent over 3,000 enquires to the Council in his time in office. No reference to the Rothercard scheme was found amongst those pieces of correspondence.

In his supplementary, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said that the asylum seeker qualification amounted to 0.0004% of the Rotherham population and for years, the Conservatives had had no issue with it and had chosen not to scrutinise or shape it. He asked the Leader if he agreed that Mr. Stafford's comments on social media were the frantic thrashings of a loser devoid of any real principles and struggling to find any real relevance but aimed to do so by bullying societies weakest members?

Councillor Read stated that he would associate himself with those remarks. He also agreed that it was not a surprise that media outlets such as the Sun and GBNews had picked this story up. Information had been provided to them, and they had chosen not to run that information. The situation was that a former MP was struggling to remain relevant and clearly had his eye on a job. He had picked on one person in pursuit of driving division and creating uncertainty. Councillor Read said this was unbecoming of the Conservative Party and they should expect better.

9. Councillor Sheppard: Could the Cabinet Member outline the dangers presented by the illegal painting, especially on mini-roundabouts, currently taking place in our Borough and across the country?

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, explained that the dangers were twofold. The individual carrying out the behaviour was putting themselves in serious danger and at risk of injury from a collision with a vehicle or the road. Secondly, graffiti on the highway was distracting for road users.

In his supplementary, Councillor Sheppard asked what the cost was to taxpayers to repair the roundabouts?

Councillor Williams stated that it cost around £1,000 to restore a roundabout. There would also be disruption to the road network whilst the repairs were carried out.

10. Councillor Sutton: What support is there for young people in Rotherham?

Councillor Cusworth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, explained that a wide range of support services were available for children and young people. These included Family Help Services and Family Hubs. In terms of Outreach and Engagement Teams, a lot of work had been done to support young people after lots of anti-social behaviour in Cortonwood. There were many online initiatives regarding development and the Building Bridges Together Project was aimed at promoting inclusion and challenging negative views, particularly around race and immigration following the disorder at Manvers in 2024. Other support included awareness of the dangers of image sharing/sexting, support for LGBTQ plus young people, anti-social behaviour education and universal support sessions.

In her supplementary, Councillor Sutton asked if Members were aware of all of the support and how to signpost residents?

Councillor Cusworth agreed to raise the matter with officers.

11. Councillor A Carter: Given the Government's U-turn on welfare reforms and on scrapping the winter fuel payments, does the Council Leader believe that he was in the wrong to back these cruel changes?

Councillor Read, Leader of the Council, stated that he was not sure what Councillor Carter was referring to as he had voted for the same motions as him, opposing the changes. The Leader had written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for DWP to express opposition.

In his supplementary, Councillor Carter said that in the Chamber, the Leader had been known to support and speak in favour of the Government's changes. He asked if the Leader thought he had been wrong, if the wrong decisions had been made and if he thought those pensioners who were just above the current Pensions Credit threshold were in poverty.

Councillor Read did not accept the premise of the question and repeated what he had said at the meeting in September 2024 regarding the motion: "The motion says we'd like the Government to pause and reconsider. I think we'd all like the Government to pause and reconsider. So on that basis we're supporting the motion in front of us today. That was the position I took then, it's still the position I take now."

12. Councillor A. Carter: The closures of the waterpark at Clifton Park over the summer so soon after opening is really disappointing. What has gone wrong here, and will the Council be recouping money spend from the contractors for the remedial works?

Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, explained that the Council understood and shared the disappointment caused by the interruptions. The issues experienced were due to two separate issues. Firstly, the paddling pool surface initially installed was found to be slippery and the Council did not want to risk any children getting hurt. Following a series of slip resistance tests, the surface was re-laid at no cost to the Council, with the contractor covering all remedial works. The paddling pool was fully operational and open to the public. Secondly, a fault occurred with the chlorine injector pump, which temporarily affected the operation of the entire Water Splash system. This issue was also repaired by the contractor at their expense, and the system was now functioning as intended.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter asked if it would be fair to say that the planning for the scheme meant that the contractors felt rushed to get this scheme finished in time for the summer holidays and, therefore, the necessary quality standards were not met before handing over the scheme to the public? He asked if the Cabinet Member would commit to undertake a review of the process that had led to the failures?

Councillor Marshall disagreed that the contractors had been rushed. It was important to strike a balance between ensuring the surface was not too abrasive while still providing enough grip for safe use. The health and safety of children came first.

13. Councillor Tinsley: Has Rotherham Borough Council made any representations to the Government Inquiry on Taxi Licensing?

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, explained that this question related to the call for evidence from the Transport Committee in Parliament who were doing a short inquiry into taxi licensing. The Committee wanted to look into the performance of the national framework for licencing, regulations of the sector and specific issues including cross-border hire, which Rotherham would call out of town taxis. Councillor Williams confirmed that the Council's Licensing Service had made a submission to the Transport Committee. The Leader, Councillor Williams, and Councillor Hughes, as Chair of Licencing, had all seen that submission. It was a very strong submission that set out the Council's position and concerns on these matters. Councillor Williams also confirmed that the Council had a strong record on the issue of taxi licensing and had taken many steps to advocate for new stronger standards.

In his supplementary, Councillor Tinsley asked if the Council would promote that a taxi used by Rotherham residents in Rotherham should have a Rotherham licence?

Councillor Williams agreed that this would be a good idea and he would raise it with officers.

14. Councillor Tinsley: A parent was fined for litter dropped by their 6 year old child without their knowledge. Does the Council think this approach is fair?

Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, stated that she was not aware of this situation and it did not seem fair. She asked Councillor Tinsley to send her the details and she would look into it.

15. Councillor A Carter: There are no published opening times of the Clifton Park's waterpark that are easy to find online. This makes it hard for families to plan activities. Why is this and will you commit to changing this so it is widely publicised?

Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, explained that she was not aware that the times were not published, and she would ensure this was corrected. The times were on the Facebook page.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter asked if the watersplash could be opened earlier than 11.00 a.m. in the summer holidays so that the Council were not encouraging young people to be out in the height of the heat, risking sun damage?

Councillor Marshall reiterated that the current opening times would be published online.

16. Councillor A. Carter: Regarding the Plan for Neighbourhoods Government funding, will the Council consider using these funds at Templeborough to strengthen and re-open the bridge at Grange Lane to better connect Brinsworth and Templeborough?

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, explained that the allocation of Plan for Neighbourhoods funding would be led by a new Neighbourhood Board in consultation with the community. Following consultation exercises in 2024 and 2025 the process of exploring interventions was underway but not yet complete. Grange Lane was not adopted highway along its full length, the northern part having been stopped up. The bridge was not a structure in the ownership of the RMBC. The matter would, therefore, not be a simple matter of maintenance, but of installing a new highway

including securing the necessary agreements of landowners and ensuring the appropriate requirements were met for adoption.

It was likely, therefore, that the suggested intervention would be of significant scale, and considerable work would be required to understand the costs and benefits of the proposal. However, at this stage in the process the suggestion could be fed into consultation for consideration by the Neighbourhood Board, when that was established.

In his supplementary question, Councillor A. Carter stated that the consultation was very clunky and difficult to access. He asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed that it was not presented well and was confusing for the residents of Brinsworth?

Councillor Williams confirmed he would raise the matter with officers and provide information to Councillor Carter.

17. Councillor Blackham: With not a single neighbouring property responding to an application to change a home in North Anston into a children's home and 35 objectors having to find out themselves that the same was planned for a home in South Anston, how can we have confidence local residents are being properly consulted about important changes in their area?

Councillor Mault, Chair of the Planning Board, explained that there were 2 different processes involved. All applications for planning permission were required by statutory legislation to be publicised by either letters to neighbouring properties or site notices posted at the site. Documents associated with planning applications were published on the Council's website.

The planning application in North Anston was promoted by the Council and consultation was undertaken by the Children and Young People's Service and with Ward Members and local residents prior to the purchase of the property. The application in South Anston was for a Lawful Development Certificate for the use of the property for a care home for children (in this case 2 children and 2 carers). Public consultation was not required for Lawful Development Certificates.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Blackham referenced the letter that had been sent from CYPS that said the Council planned to change the use of property from a Class 3 to a Class 2 residential home. Residents did not respond as they felt the decision had already been made. Councillor Blackham asked if, given the lack of confidence in the process, the Council would reconsider the decision to use the property in North Anston as a children's home.

Councillor Mault stated that consultation had been carried out, as shown by the letter Councillor Blackham referenced. In terms of the process, Councillor Mault stated he would take the comments back to Planning Board.

18. Councillor A. Carter: Given a further £9 million overspend on the refurbishment of the markets, does the Council still believe this is value for money and what projects will miss out because £9 million is being taken to fund this?

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, stated that the market and library development was a huge regeneration project for the Town Centre, boosting footfall, supporting businesses and helping to foster new economic activity in the Town Centre.

Redeveloping an existing building was a challenge, it added complexity which often translated into cost. Investing in a high-quality market that was fit for the future was value for money. It should not be forgotten that the project would also create a brand new central library which would bring additional footfall and custom to the Town Centre.

Councillor Williams explained that, as with any Capital Programme, there were projects that became undeliverable, for a variety of reasons, as further development work was done, and it was from such projects that funding had been moved.

In his supplementary, Councillor A. Carter asked Councillor Williams to provide a list of the capital projects that were not going to take place due to the overspend?

Councillor Williams stated that he would provide a written response. In relation to the overspend, Councillor Williams explained that the cost increases between the Cabinet reports of September 2022 and March 2024 (£9.2m) were driven by a number of key factors, most notably the period of super-inflation that impacted the construction industry following the pandemic. Other notable additional costs included the identification and removal of RAAC concrete, and improved arrangements for the temporary indoor market, enabling traders to remain in situ during the works, which was at their request, following consultation.

19. Councillor Tinsley: Parking enforcement on Maltby High Street feels inconsistent, letting cars overstay and affecting businesses. Will the Council commit to regular, reliable patrols to support fair parking and local traders?

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

20. Councillor Currie: Why did Keppel Ward receive no funding from the 'our places' pot when we were the biggest contributors to the consultation. Please could you explain the criteria for the allocation of the funding?

Councillor Currie was not present at the meeting to ask the question, and a written response would therefore be provided.

21. Councillor Tinsley: Last summer, grass cutting complaints were high, but this year's dry weather limited growth. Why weren't teams redirected to other tasks, like hedge cutting, to ensure staff productivity and timely maintenance?

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

22. Councillor Tinsley: With the review of waste collection routes and new working methods, are there plans to reduce the number of bin lorries or collection routes?

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

23. Councillor Thorp: Can you please confirm that the £20m Neighbourhood Fund will not be just used in Rotherham Town Centre only, and using the reason as it will benefit everyone.

Councillor Williams, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, explained that the Plan for Neighbourhoods Boundary in Rotherham had been specified by Government – it was actually the same boundary as the one determined by the previous Government – and was one of 75 built-up areas that had been identified across the country. The area was centred on Rotherham Town Centre and included the surrounding neighbourhoods and communities. The area was based on data provided by the Office for National Statistics and other factors. The allocation of funding would be led by the Neighbourhood Board, when that was established, in consultation with the community. Following consultation exercises in 2024 and 2025 the process of exploring interventions was underway but not yet complete.

Councillor Williams asked Councillor Thorp to let him know of any suggestions on how the funding could be used for the benefit of those who visited the area as well as those who lived there.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp stated that Councillor Williams had said in Improving Lives Select Commission that the Neighbourhood Board will just be the Town Board with a few other people on it. Councillor Thorp also stated that money had been removed from town investment to Effingham Street Public Realm

improvements works. Councillor Thorp asked if the £20 million would be used to stack back up for the Town Centre.

Councillor Williams stated that he had not said that. The Neighbourhood Board would be made up from the community and that process was taking place. There had to be at least 2 Elected Members on the Board so Councillor Williams encouraged Councillor Thorp to let him know if he would be interested. He also reiterated that the Neighbourhood Board would consider any funding proposals and that the proposals would benefit those who did not live or work directly inside the immediate boundary.

24. Councillor Ball: Why has Scrutiny failed to halt Labour's project slippages in the Capital Programme?

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

25. Councillor Ball: How do you justify oversight amid rising regeneration costs under Labour?

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

26. Councillor Thorp: Why has the Audit Committee failed to challenge Labour's reallocation of Pathfinder funds from the planned Town Centre projects, funnelling yet more money into the centre while outer Wards are denied fair shares for vital infrastructure?

Councillor Baggaley, Chair of the Audit Committee, explained that the role of the Audit Committee was to consider internal controls and issues raised through external controls and audit processes. The reallocation of funds within the Pathfinder Programme was not an issue that had been raised as part of these processes. Any re-allocations had been approved by Cabinet, and it was not the role of the Audit Committee to challenge or scrutinise those Cabinet decisions. The Committee had to stay within the remit that had been given to it.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Thorp referred to the £20m Neighbourhood Fund and asked if the Audit Committee would just stand by and watch as the money was moved, not for the purpose it was designed for.

Councillor Baggaley reiterated that it was not the role of the Audit Committee to scrutinise decisions. Its role was around the controls and risk frameworks that existed within the Council. Any decisions like that would need to be scrutinised through the relevant processes.

27. Councillor Yasseen: I assured my constituents I would keep them informed about Selective Licensing, especially after repeated officer assurances that we would receive regular updates on this critical issue. It directly affects my Ward, yet I now face daily inquiries and remain completely in the dark. Why has the Elected Ward Councillor not been properly briefed or kept updated?

Councillor Beresford, Cabinet Member for Housing, was not present at the meeting to respond and a written response would therefore be provided.

28. Councillor Ball: Why hasn't an independent body been commissioned to review whether the budget overspends stem from ideological spending over taxpayer value?

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

29. Councillor Ball: How has your Board challenged Labour's underfunding of NHS partnerships?

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

30. Councillor Yasseen: Do you agree that conducting a second Selective Licensing consultation survey more than 3 months after the statutory consultation closed could reasonably be perceived by residents as the Council acting in bad faith or attempting to shift the goalposts?

Councillor Beresford, Cabinet Member for Housing, was not present at the meeting to respond and a written response would therefore be provided.

31. Councillor Yasseen: What is the Council's Policy and position on unauthorised flags or banners being displayed on public property, including lampposts, railings, and other street furniture?

Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, explained that the Council welcomed the display of flags on private property, recognising flags were often used to celebrate community events, express national pride or mark certain occasions. The formal Policy was clear: the Council did not permit the use of public assets or the public realm for political purposes. Any political flags, banners, posters, or offensive material would be removed immediately, and where appropriate, enforcement action could be taken. Formal agreements were in place with some Community Groups and Parish Councils to install items such as hanging baskets, Christmas decorations, or Poppies on lighting columns. These agreements included safety checks, approved installation methods, and removal requirements.

In terms of public safety, the Council would use its legal powers under the Highways Act 1980 to remove any unauthorised items from the adopted highway. Flags or graffiti that posed a risk to pedestrians or road users would be removed as soon as practicably possible. The Council was also concerned about public safety around street lighting columns, particularly where ladders were used to install flags. Council operatives used specialist equipment and followed strict safety protocols to protect themselves and the public.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that St. George was a Palestinian and Greek Christian Soldier who was martyred and buried in Palestine. He was adopted by England as a patron saint in the 14th century and the history was one of solidarity, faith, sacrifice, diversity and not of hate. She asked Councillor Marshall if she agreed that the embracing of the St George's flag should be used as an opportunity for education and inclusion.

Councillor Marshall stated that she was unaware of this and would support the opportunity for educating residents.

32. Councillor Ball: Why has there been no scrutiny of migration pressures overwhelming health resources due to Labour open-border policies?

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

71. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.