

<b>NOTICE OF MOTION</b>	<b>Date of Council Meeting: 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025</b>
	<b>Mover:</b> Cllr Baum-Dixon
	<b>Seconded:</b> Cllr Z Collingham
	<b>Title of Motion:</b>  <b>Standing up for rural communities</b>

**This Council Believes:**

Rotherham deserves a Council that values its rural communities as vital to the borough's wellbeing, sustainability, and prosperity. By passing this motion, we commit to ensuring rural areas receive the attention and support they need to thrive.

**This Council Notes:**

1. That 70% of Rotherham is rural, providing vital space for recreation, wellbeing, and biodiversity, while being home to communities that face unique challenges in accessing services, infrastructure and protecting against rural crime.
2. That the current system of determining eligibility for free school transport is based on distance measured "as the crow flies." While this system works in urban areas with direct links to schools, it disadvantages rural pupils who may live within distance catchment but have to travel significantly further due to indirect routes and lack of safe, direct paths.
3. That rural communities are often poorly connected to public transport, impeding access to essential public services, including health and wellbeing services.
4. That responsibility for public transport, particularly buses, now rests with the South Yorkshire Mayor, and that the Leader of the Council, in his role with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), should ensure the needs of rural communities are taken into account during the rollout of the new publicly owned transport system.
5. That access to reliable 5G mobile phone service and high-speed internet is essential for rural residents and businesses, yet many areas, including parts of Rotherham, face significant connectivity gaps.
6. That rural crime, including off-road bikes, cannabis cultivation and fly-tipping on farmland, leave many rural residents feeling unsafe and lead to financial hardship for landowners and damage to our environment. Effective and timely collaboration and deployment by South Yorkshire's Rural and Off-Road Policing Team is vital in the fight against rural crime.

7. That rural communities, particularly farmers, act as custodians of our environment, safeguarding wildlife, promoting sustainability, and leading efforts to combat climate change.
8. That many family farms are asset-rich but cash-poor, with profitability often disconnected from land values. Such farms are at risk of forced sale due to Government reforms to Agricultural Property Relief (APR) and Business Property Relief (BPR). The National Farmers Union (NFU) estimates that around 75% of working farms could be affected, with a typical cereal farm making a profit of £34,000 and being hit with ten annual tax instalments of £53,000, over 1.5 times its profits.

### **This Council Resolves To:**

1. Develop a Rural Strategy for Rotherham, prioritising transport, digital access, healthcare, and economic opportunities tailored to rural needs.
2. Work with, encourage, and facilitate the installation of 5G infrastructure in rural areas, like Woodsetts and Thorpe Hesley, while ensuring that culturally significant sites are respected.
3. Ensure rural issues are considered in all Council policies and decisions at both borough-wide and local levels.
4. Advocate for improved public transport access for rural areas, including public services and school routes, by working with SYMCA and the South Yorkshire Mayor to ensure rural needs are prioritised in the rollout of the new publicly owned transport system.
5. Review the criteria for free school transport, exploring a test based on the shortest accessible route from home to school, rather than "as the crow flies," to ensure rural pupils are not unfairly excluded from support.
6. Work with South Yorkshire Police to address rural and wildlife crime, pushing for an expanded Off-Road team, with a dedicated Rotherham unit, and call on RMBC officers to regularly attend Rural Crime and Off-Road Policing meetings.
7. Recognise and support farmers, particularly family farmers, as key custodians of our environment, promoting biodiversity, sustainability, and climate resilience.
8. Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to call for the reversal of APR and BPR restriction in this year's Budget, supporting family farmers in Rotherham.
9. Explore additional council-led initiatives to support rural businesses, including strengthening local food networks, improving rural infrastructure, and advocating for fairer funding for rural communities.

### **To be completed by Governance**

Date received by Governance/Head of DS:	
Date sent to Monitoring Officer:	
Date approval from Monitoring Officer received:	

Please contact [governance@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:governance@rotherham.gov.uk) for any support