

**THE CABINET
15th December, 2025**

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Baker-Rogers, Beresford, Cusworth, Marshall and Williams.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alam.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cusworth and Councillor Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 90 (HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27) on the grounds that family members were Council tenants. Both remained in the Chamber and voted on the matter.

84. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present at the meeting and no questions submitted in writing.

85. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17th November, 2025, be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

86. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that there were no items of business on the agenda that would require the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

87. ADULT SOCIAL CARE MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY 2026-2029

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the outcomes of the consultation on the future vision, themes and priorities for mental health and presented the first Rotherham Council Adult Social Care Mental Health Strategy 2026-2029. Cabinet had approved a new operating model for the Council's Mental Health Service in December 2023, which included a recommendation to develop a co-designed Adult Mental Health Strategy for Rotherham, once the new model was operational.

The consultation took place from 8th May 2025 to 27th July 2025 to seek the views of people with lived experience of mental ill health, their families, carers, and professionals on the future vision, values, and priorities for mental health provision in Rotherham.

The most valued areas, as identified through multiple-choice responses, were:

- Empowering you, by receiving the right support, at the right time
- Everyone has the same opportunities to access support, regardless of their background and need
- People can improve their overall mental health and wellbeing
- Access to help, advice and services which are closer to home

The Strategy acknowledged and built on Rotherham's Four Cornerstones, developed in partnership with people with lived experience, partners, and support organisations. These principles were widely recognised as essential for good practice:

- Welcome and Care
- Value and Include
- Communicate
- Work in Partnership

The Service priorities identified as being most important were:

- Reducing wait times for assessments and services
- Clear crisis support and contact points
- Easier access to information, advice, and support
- Consistent access to services across Rotherham

The outcomes from the consultation had shaped the Strategy which was attached at Appendix 1. Further details and analysis on the consultation were attached at Appendix 2 with the Strategy Delivery Plan attached at Appendix 3.

The report was considered by the Health Select Commission who advised that the recommendations be supported. Discussions at Health Select had focussed on increased depression rates, transition pathways, partner integration and alignment with other Council strategies, the proposed Mental Health Partnership Board, support for under-represented minority groups, loneliness and isolation, male suicide rates and success measures.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approve publication of the new Rotherham Council Adult Social Care Mental Health Strategy 2026-2029.

88. UNPAID CARERS STRATEGY 2026-2031

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval of the Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031. In July 2022, the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board approved the Borough That Cares Strategic Framework 2022-2025. The strategic framework created a foundation of support, improved information and advice, established a carers network and introduced a co-production programme with communities to build a carer friendly borough. In addition, it established the Borough That Cares Network, which had facilitated several engagement opportunities, including the development of the Council's carers webpages and a proposed new 'The Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031'.

There were approximately 26,313 carers living in Rotherham. This represented just over 10% of Rotherham's population. A carer was anyone who cared, unpaid, for a friend or family member who could not cope without support. This could be because of ageing, illness, disability, poor mental health, or an addiction.

There had been a number of key achievements over the 2022-2025 Strategy which included:

- The stabilisation of voluntary sector carer groups/services.
- The Borough That Cares Strategic Network provided a well-attended regular forum for organisations and groups supporting carers and carers.
- The establishment of a voice, influence and engagement task group with a focus on the health and wellbeing of Carers known as the Unpaid Carers Multi-Agency Strategic Group.
- Refreshed and improved information, advice and guidance available to carers.
- Embedded an integrated approach to identifying and supporting carer health and wellbeing through the partnership working of the Borough That Cares Network which represents social care, health and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
- The introduction of a co-production programme with communities to build a carer friendly borough via The Borough That Cares Network, utilised to facilitate a number of opportunities including the development of the Council's carers webpages and the vision, priorities and commitments for the new strategy to 2031.

During April to August 2025, engagement had been undertaken with carers, Adult Social Care, Health and other key stakeholders to reflect on progress and gather feedback on achievements between 2022-2025, and to co-design the vision, priorities and commitments for the next five years to 2031. Twenty engagement sessions took place involving 399 participants and further details were set out in Section 4 of the report.

The feedback from the engagement sessions had shaped the detail of the Strategy for the next 5 years and was focussed around 5 key commitments:

- Commitment 1 – Identification and Early Intervention (paragraph 2.4)
- Commitment 2 – Support Carers and Ensure Their Voice is Heard (paragraph 2.5)
- Commitment 3 – Support Carers Through Times of Change (paragraph 2.6)
- Commitment 4 – Work in Partnership (paragraph 2.7)
- Commitment 5 – Co-Design a Responsive Support Offer for Carers (paragraph 2.8)

The report was considered by a joint meeting of the Health Select and Improving Lives Select Commissions who advised that the recommendations be supported with additions. Discussions focussed on the challenges faced by young carers, inconsistencies in information sharing, systemic barriers, financial support including limitation and means testing, and development of the underpinning action plan. The Commissions also requested that specific local data be included, where possible on page 6 of the Strategy and, under the 'Identification and Early Intervention' commitment on page 11, include specific reference to improving the partnership approach and associated processes to identifying young carers, given the acknowledged existing shortcomings and challenges in the context of the potential lifelong implications of failing to provide timely and appropriate support. Cabinet accepted these recommendations.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approves the Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026- 2031 which is due to be launched in April 2026, with the addition of:

- a) Specific local data, where possible, is added to page 6 of the Strategy.
- b) Under the 'Identification and Early Intervention' commitment on page 11, include specific reference to improving the partnership approach and associated processes to identifying young carers, given the acknowledged existing shortcomings and challenges in the context of the potential lifelong implications of failing to provide timely and appropriate support.

89. ADULT SOCIAL CARE CHARGING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which set out the basis for the proposal to amend the Council's Charging Policy and provided an update on the Adult Social Care Charging Policy consultation which sought views on a new combined charging policy for residential and non-residential

care. The report also outlined the outcomes of the consultation, recommended specific areas for inclusion within the new consolidated charging policy and sought approval from Cabinet to implement the new Policy from 1st April 2026.

The Council had a duty to provide or arrange services that helped to prevent or delay people from developing eligible needs for care and support, as defined in the Care Act 2014, which focused on improving people's independence and wellbeing. The Care Act 2014 required that, where an individual was provided with residential/nursing care services to meet their eligible needs, a financial assessment had to be undertaken to determine whether they had sufficient resources to pay part or all of the cost of the care or required financial assistance from the local authority. The local authority was required to follow a set process in determining the level of financial contribution which should be made. Where care was provided in the community, the local authority had a discretion whether to charge or not for that service. Where a local authority decided that a charge would be made, depending on the income of the individual, a standardised set process could be used in which the local authority could decide whether certain sources of income would, or would not, be considered.

A person who received care and support in their own home would need to pay their daily living costs including rent, food and utilities, and therefore must have enough money to meet these costs. The charge must not reduce a person's income below a certain amount. This amount was known as a Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG). MIG rates were set each year by the Department of Health and Social Care and were reviewed annually and adjusted for inflation. The MIG amount depended on a person's age, marital status, disability status and whether they had dependent children.

The Budget and Financial Strategy for 2025/26 was approved at Council on the 5th March 2025. It included, as part of the revenue savings proposals, a review of the current Non-Residential Charging Policy for Adult Social Care. The review had led to a recommendation to combine the Non-Residential Charging Policy with the Residential Charging Framework into one overarching Adult Social Care Charging Policy. This would enable greater transparency and align with expectations within the Care Act 2014.

The consultation was undertaken on the 2 proposals of:

1. The removal of the maximum charge for non-residential care, while maintaining the minimum charge of £1, for people who fund their own care.
2. The introduction of an administrative charge for organising care for people who fund their own care.

The full consultation analysis was attached at Appendix 1. For Proposal 1 'Removal of the maximum weekly charge', a total of 97 responses were received. The majority of respondents opposed the change, with 49% strongly disagreeing and 31% disagreeing. A smaller proportion supported the proposal, with 11% agreeing and only 2% strongly agreeing. Additionally, 7% were unsure about the proposal.

For Proposal 2 'Introducing an annual fee for self-funders where the Council facilitates the care package', there was a total of 97 responses. The majority of respondents opposed the proposal, with 56% strongly disagreeing and 26% disagreeing, indicating significant resistance to the introduction of this charge. Only a small proportion supported the change, with 14% agreeing and 2% strongly agreeing, while 2% were unsure. Overall, feedback showed strong opposition to adding an administrative fee for self-funders.

The option to retain the maximum charge but increase the rate so it aligned with the higher rate of a standard dementia nursing placement (rather than a standard residential placement) was recommended. This was because it retained a maximum weekly charge, offering protection for those with the highest care costs while increasing the cap to better reflect the costs of the care being provided. This ensured contributions remained affordable for most people but fairer overall, as more individuals paid closer to the true cost of their care.

In relation to the administration fee, the option to introduce an administrative charge of £350 as a one-off charge to reflect that most of the work involved in arranging care for self-funders would be at the start of the process was recommended. This would be a one-off fee, until a person's care changed, requiring a new package of care to be commissioned, at which point they would be charged a further fee.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the outcome of the consultation.
2. Approve implementation of the Adult Social Care – Charging for Care and Support Policy (Appendix 2) from 1st April 2026.
3. Retain a maximum charge for non-residential care, but align it with the standard charge for nursing with dementia support, for those who fund their own care.
4. Introduce a one-off administrative fee for arranging care on behalf of people who fund their own care.

90. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) PLAN, RENT SETTING AND SERVICE CHARGES 2026-27

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27 for endorsement and recommendation to Council. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recorded all expenditure and income relating to the provision of Council housing and related services, and the Council was required to produce a HRA Business Plan setting out its investment priorities over a 30-year period.

From the 1st April 2026, the Government would implement a 10 year social rent settlement. This was the Government's Policy on the annual increase for social housing rents. The 10 year settlement set the maximum rent increase at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as of September the year prior plus 1%. The 10 year rent settlement had given greater certainty on the level of forecast income to fund the HRA Business Plan going forward. It would enable longer term planning for investment, delivery of services and growth. The rent settlement was part of the Government's plan for the future of social housing which promised to enable local authorities and housing associations to deliver thousands of new affordable homes to meet need and drive up the safety and quality of existing homes.

The proposed 2026/27 HRA Business Plan incorporated the Council's commitments to continue and extend the Council's Housing Delivery Programme, alongside significant additional investment to support decency and thermal efficiency in existing council homes. The Plan included provision for £1.329bn investment in the housing stock over 30 years, an increase of £350m compared to the 2025/26 plan. This was alongside continuing to fund day-to-day housing management, repairs and maintenance costs.

£122.9m would be invested to deliver an estimated 500 further Council homes by 2037/38, in addition to the £90.9m that was earmarked to support the current Housing Delivery Programme which was on track to deliver 1,000 homes by summer 2027. The Business Plan would also provide for additional investment benefitting current and future tenants, with:

- Increased investment up to £60k per home over the 30 year plan period.
- £14m in 2026/27 to continue investment in the external elements of homes e.g. renewing roofs, guttering and facias etc.
- £7m in 2026/27 to be invested in internal refurbishment works such as electrical rewires, replacement boilers, kitchens and bathrooms etc.
- An additional £41 million to ensure 9,300 properties reach Energy Performance Certificate band C by 2030.

Alongside providing the draft HRA budget for 2026/27, the report recommended proposed levels for housing rents, non-dwelling rents, District Heating charges and other service charges for 2026/27. It was recommended to Council that dwelling rents be increased by 4.8% and up to £2 per week (equivalent to CPI+1% and up to £2 per week rent convergence). This was dependent upon a Government decision expected in January 2026, which would clarify the approach to social rent convergence. The 2026/27 average weekly rent based on an increase of 4.8% + £2 per week would be £101.07, an average increase of £6.17 per week.

There were approximately 15,000 tenancies in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (UC) who would not be directly affected by an increase in rent and approximately 4,500 tenancies that would be affected as they would pay rent from their household income. The tenants in receipt of benefits (Housing Benefit or UC) who would see their benefit entitlement adjusted to meet an increase in rent were:

- c10,969 households who are on Universal Credit
- 2,559 households who are on full Housing Benefit entitlement
- 1,404 households who are on part Housing Benefit entitlement

It was noted that rent convergence would only be applied to properties that were not currently at Formula Rent. Formula Rent for social housing was a calculation based on property value and size (number of bedrooms) and local affordability (earnings). The additional income generated from convergence would ensure the viability of the HRA Business plan, particularly in the early years of the plan where there was a significant amount of investment required to ensure compliance with increasing regulatory standards. In the absence of an announcement from Government confirming the availability of convergence as an option, the proposed rent increase would be the current rent settlement level of CPI+1% (4.8%).

Cabinet was fully supportive of the proposals. The Leader specifically noted the investments in existing stock, the investments in new builds and the investments in energy efficiency. He stated that it was good to be able to propose a HRA business plan under a Government that supported Council Homes. The Leader also reiterated that the rent increase would not impact all Council tenants and some would be paying less than the average increase.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board who advised that the recommendations be supported. Discussions focussed on damp and mould, robustness of reserve levels, the convergence, cost rise, advice services, risk, shared ownership, government assistance and bill delays.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommends to Council to:

1. Approve the proposed 2026/27 HRA Business Plan.
2. Note that the Business Plan will be reviewed annually to provide an updated financial position.
3. Agree that Council dwelling rents are increased by 4.8% and, dependent upon the Government announcement in January 2026, implement a policy of rent convergence. Allowing rents for social housing properties that are currently below the Government-calculated formula rent to increase by an additional £2 per week in 2026/27. If convergence is capped below £2 that will be the level applied.
4. Agree that the Council should retain the policy of realigning rents on properties at below formula rent to the formula rent level when the property is re-let to a new tenant.
5. Agree that affordable rents are calculated at relet, based on an individual property valuation.
6. Agree that affordable rents are increased by 4.8% in 2026/27.
7. Agree that shared ownership rents are increased by 5% in 2026/27.
8. Agree that charges for communal facilities, parking spaces, cooking gas and use of laundry facilities are increased by 3% in 2026/27.
9. Agree that charges for garages are increased by 10% in 2026/27.
10. Agree that the District Heating unit charge per kWh remains at 13.09 pence per kWh.
11. Agree that the decision to reduce the price of District Heating Charges during 2026/27 be delegated to the Assistant Director of Housing in conjunction with the Assistant Director of Financial Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing. The delegation would only be used to respond to a change in Government policy or a significant change in the Ofgem price cap that has the effect of a lower unit price.
12. Approve the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2026/27 as shown in Appendix 8.

Councillor Cusworth and Councillor Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 90 (HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27) on the grounds that family members were Council tenants. Both remained in the Chamber and voted on the matter.

91. HOUSING FIRST RECOMMISSIONING

Consideration was given to the report which set out recommendations for the future commissioning of Housing First provision in Rotherham. Housing First was a non-statutory, established approach to supporting residents to move away from long term homelessness. It provided intensive support where the provider also sourced suitable accommodation for the client. It was reserved for the most complex and disengaged people within the homeless population, complementing the Council's offer to alleviate and prevent homelessness. Housing First had been delivered in Rotherham since 2018 by South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) following a direct award.

Housing First was an established approach to successfully reducing long-term homelessness for the most complex and disengaged people within the homeless population. People accessing the service were not required to meet specific conditions beyond a willingness to maintain a tenancy, as they would be with more traditional approaches. Support services were offered but were not mandatory, allowing individuals to choose when and how they engaged with them. Support was individualised to meet the specific needs of each person, empowering them to take control of their lives. According to research published by Homeless Link in November 2024, Housing First reduced anti-social and offending behaviours. 84% of participants were involved in ASB or offending at entry, dropping to 45% by the end of year 3.

Housing First in Rotherham was approved as a pilot project by Cabinet on 16th October 2017 (Background Papers Agenda item 11. Rotherham Side by Side - Housing Related Support Review Pages 124 - 160) and had been operational for over 6 years. This followed a recommendation that a pathway be created for people with complex needs based on a Housing First model to support 20–30 clients. The current contract was delivered by South Yorkshire Housing Association (SYHA) which sub-contracted part of the service to Target Housing Ltd, with a total capacity for 35 service users, following an increase of 10 units from 25 units in 2021. This contract would end on the 31st May 2026.

As Housing First had proved a successful solution for some of the most complex people experiencing homelessness, it was recommended that this service continue. Due to the principle of the service offering a longer-term housing option, compared with more traditional models, a longer-term contract would be most suited to the project. The current service had delivered approximately 90% occupancy (based on the last full year figures for 2024/25). This meant that of the 35 units commissioned, around 32 were being delivered at any one time. The slight undercapacity allowed for the contractor to make changes and repairs to the property as required. The tender process would require a minimum of 30 units but providers might be able to provide more with the increase in budget.

The total current annual contract value was £229,189 (for 35 people this was equivalent to £6,548 per person, per annum). These costs had not increased since 2018 and, for the financial year 2023/24, the lead provider reported making a significant deficit which would suggest these costings were no longer viable. Benchmarking had shown that it was difficult to determine a cost per unit as it was dependent on usage and service model and therefore fluctuated. However, Housing First project costs on average were between £7,000 and £9,000 per person, per annum. The uplift to the contract value would be included when the tender was advertised and would bring the service in line with other Housing First programmes. This would be more attractive to the market when undertaking the procurement and would allow for the provider to source properties outside of their existing portfolio as it would be less reliant on rental income to supplement the income of the project.

Research conducted by Homeless Link on the approach showed that the effectiveness of services is linked to how closely they adhered to the set of key principles underpinning delivery. The separation of the provider for the housing and support elements was a core principle of the Housing First model. The Rotherham model was not fully aligned with principle 3 because, in many cases, the support was being provided by the same organisation as the landlord. Providers reported that this created a conflict of interest when housing management issues occurred, which could lead to a breakdown in relationships and support with the client.

Separating the landlord from the support provider would adhere to the evidence base as support relationships could remain in place regardless of tenancy issues and would allow support to continue should the person leave their tenancy. In the re-commissioned service, support providers would be required to offer assistance in sourcing a suitable tenancy that could become a long-term solution. The proposed model would focus on identifying suitably sized and located properties for each customer moving away from allocated housing stock. The successful provider would need to demonstrate their ability to do this and manage any risk. This early engagement and support to find the most suitable property would also ensure greater choice and control to individuals (and align closer to the Housing First principles).

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the recommissioning and procurement of Housing First for a five-year contract term on a 3 year plus up to 2 year basis.
2. Note the intention through the recommission to align more closely to the principles of Housing First, recognising that this is key to driving sustainable change and securing long-term impact for residents.

92. HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the continued work to scope the future delivery model for Repairs and Maintenance Services in Rotherham. The Council's Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service, contracted out since 2010, continued to deliver strong performance and value for money. The current contracts with Mears and Equans had been extended to March 2027, allowing time to assess future delivery options while keeping tenant needs central to decision-making.

This report outlined the work undertaken in 2025 to evaluate long-term delivery models, including an options appraisal and performance review. The findings supported maintaining current arrangements while exploring future possibilities, ensuring continuity and alignment with strategic goals. The intention, therefore, was to extend the contracts to 2030 as permitted within the existing contractual agreements. A further Cabinet report on options for arrangements post-2030 would come be submitted in the spring of 2027, allowing 3 years to implement Cabinet's preferred option.

In early 2025, Housing Property Services commissioned Lumensol, a multi-disciplinary consultancy specialising in social housing repairs and maintenance, to complete an Options Appraisal on the current repairs, maintenance and investment delivery model to assess its ability to meet service users' and the Council's needs in both the medium (2027-2030) and long term (2030+). It concluded that the current partnerships with Equans and Mears worked well in all available cost and quality metrics, performed more positively than most contracts and services in the current market that they had assessed, and should be extended to full term. The Options Appraisal also recommended several improvements to support investment planning, service delivery, value for money and assurance. These included considering the future of the capital investment programme and its delivery, the delivery of the Caretaking Service and modernising the Repairs and Maintenance Service through improved performance, assurance and governance mechanisms. It also explored options for the longer-term delivery of the Repairs and Maintenance Service. These would continue to be investigated in more detail, with updates provided as more information became available.

Awaab's Law was implemented in October 2025 which placed new legal duties for social landlords to respond swiftly and effectively to health hazards in tenants' homes particularly damp and mould, with further hazards being introduced in 2026 and 2027. The implementation of any new delivery model in the medium term could impact the Council's performance and preparation for the legislative changes set out in the report. Therefore, it was imperative that the next steps were considered carefully and with wider reforms of the Housing Service in mind.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the outcome of the review work undertaken to date.
2. Note the intention to complete a viability study on future models of delivery and report back to Cabinet in Spring 2027, for a decision post-2030.
3. Approve the extension of the Repairs and Maintenance contracts to 2030.
4. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Housing to undertake a 12 week public consultation on the outcomes of the feasibility study.

93. LIBRARY STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report which provided a review of performance against the 2021–2026 Library Strategy and its associated objectives and performance targets. It established that the majority of actions and objectives set out within the Strategy had been achieved, contributing to the Council's wider ambitions for thriving neighbourhoods, cultural engagement, health and wellbeing, and improved digital access. The report also sought approval to undertake a public consultation on a new Library Strategy for the period 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service. The consultation would ensure that the new Strategy remained relevant, continued to meet community needs, and aligned with the Council's priorities and national library frameworks, and also met the statutory service requirements.

The current Library Strategy was developed following a comprehensive analysis of local need and significant public consultation. It was approved by Cabinet in October 2020 and adopted by Council in November 2020, providing the framework for modernising library services across the Borough. It set out an ambitious plan to improve library buildings and facilities, strengthen community partnerships, increase digital inclusion, and deliver cultural and learning opportunities for residents.

Section 2.1.2 of the report set out the progress made against the seven key objectives. Highlights included libraries evolving into cultural hubs; increases in the number of young people reading for pleasure; upgraded ICT infrastructure; delivering coding clubs, homework support and employability programmes; creating autism-friendly spaces in multiple libraries; investing more than £1.5m in refurbishments and the beginning of construction on the new Central Library.

The 2021–2026 Library Strategy established a set of measurable targets to ensure progress could be tracked and evaluated throughout the 5 year period. These targets were designed to reflect the Service’s priorities and demonstrate the value and impact of libraries across Rotherham. Progress was monitored via monthly dashboards in collaboration with the Performance and Improvement Team. 7 out of 10 targets had been met. Appendix 3 - Library Strategy Performance Against Objectives and Targets provided further detail, outlining performance to date against the key objectives and targets as set out in the Strategy.

Approval was sought to undertake a Borough-wide public consultation to inform the development of a new Library Strategy for 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs. This consultation would ensure that the next Strategy reflected community priorities, addressed areas of underperformance, and continued to align with statutory obligations and Council objectives. It would also provide an opportunity to consider how libraries could best support thriving neighbourhoods, digital inclusion, cultural engagement, and health and wellbeing in a sustainable way.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board who advised that the recommendations be supported. The Cabinet Member reminded all Members to assist with the consultation and ensure hard to reach groups were included.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the review of performance against the 2021–2026 Library Strategy, including key achievements and challenges identified during the Strategy period.
2. Approve the undertaking of a period of consultation with the public, partners, stakeholders and interested parties on the development of a new Library Strategy for the period 2027–2032 and a future service delivery model for the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service.
3. Agree that a further report be submitted to Cabinet following the consultation to present a draft Library Strategy 2027–2032, which will identify potential service improvements and efficiencies.
4. Authorise the Assistant Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism to notify the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) of the intention to consult on the Library Strategy and any potential changes to service provision.

94. **ROTHERHAM EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGY**

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy for endorsement. The current Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy was adopted in 2019. Since the adoption of the Strategy the social, economic and policy contexts have changed significantly, including changes in the work, health and skills landscape following the pandemic, changes in Government policy, and the development of a new South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.

Reflecting these changes, a proposed new Employment and Skills Strategy, covering the period 2026-31, had been produced for the Rotherham Together Partnership. The new Strategy would contribute to the delivery of the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy but also identified the key challenges and priorities that were specific to Rotherham and proposed a new focus for the co-ordination of activity in Rotherham.

The Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy contained 3 Missions, as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report, which responded to the local priorities emerging from the analysis and reflected Rotherham's particular opportunities and challenges. There were key roles to be played by a range of partners to address these missions, particularly for employers who had a central role to play not only as the beneficiaries of a skilled workforce but as active investors in the development of their employees.

For each Mission, the Strategy highlighted a range of existing and planned activities (including those relating to employment support which the Pathways to Work approach will bring together as a single system) to ensure that these continued to deliver for Rotherham residents and businesses. These included:

- The Economic Inactivity Trailblazer and the Health Growth Accelerator
- Adult Skills Fund
- Employment Solutions, Ambition and Advance
- Workwell, Working Win and Connect to Work
- South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) Apprenticeship Hub Skills Bank funding to support employers with the cost of training their workforce

It was noted that endorsing the proposed Employment and Skills Strategy (2026–2031) would provide an up-to-date, evidence-based framework to guide collective action on employment and skills across Rotherham that linked to the South Yorkshire Strategy and the main policies of the Get Britain Working White Paper. The Strategy had been developed through a robust process, including detailed analysis of current and projected labour market data, and engagement with partners. It reflected shared priorities and set out a clear direction for collaborative delivery. As a key partner in the Rotherham Together Partnership, the Council's endorsement demonstrated leadership and commitment, helping to secure buy-in from

other stakeholders and ensuring the Strategy had the credibility and momentum needed for successful implementation.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board who advised that the recommendations be supported. The Board also requested an update in September 2026 on performance against targets, including costings for activities undertaken.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the formal adoption of the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31.
2. Notes that the Rotherham Employment and Skills Board is tasked with overseeing the delivery and monitoring of the Strategy and with reporting on progress to Cabinet and the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) on an annual basis.

95. ROTHERHAM (SYMCA) LOCAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE (LEVI) FUND

Consideration was given to the report which provided detail on the proposal that Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council participate in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund programme. This initiative, supported by Government funding, aimed to accelerate the deployment of public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in the South Yorkshire region. This would see the identification of Council land and property, both off street and on street, for the provision and installation of EV Chargers.

Based on a concession contract, the Scheme and Fund would be procured and managed by SYMCA but the day-to-day management of the contractor/concessionaire within Rotherham would be the responsibility of the Council to deliver, which included review and identification of Council land and property with the contractor. It was expected that this Scheme would provide between 500 and 1,500 additional charge points throughout Rotherham subject to site suitability and other dependencies.

It was anticipated that the Rotherham Borough would receive approximately 20% (£1.6M) of the allocation in the provision of infrastructure (i.e. not monies given to the Council, but the value of works carried out by the Contractor and funded by SYMCA), subject to final agreement and SYMCA's retention. The allocation was designed to enable EV Infrastructure (EVI) installations, whilst supporting less commercially attractive locations ahead of demand. A procurement approach was being designed to attract a contractor/concessionaire for 15 years to deliver the programme at no cost to the Council. The Contractor would also look to directly fund more commercially opportune areas,

between 20% – 100% of the programme value, giving a total capital investment value of between £1.9M to £3.2M for the Rotherham Borough.

The aim was to establish broad working principles across a wide range of sites in the initial phase, whilst providing an acceptable level of geographic and Ward coverage and, therefore, visibility for the Programme to promote interest and engagement. This would then lead to an accelerated programme to secure minimum provision across all Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA's – groups of between 400 and 1,200 households) and meet estimated demand across the Borough in the main phase. The concession would then become self-managed by the contractor/concessionaire with little likelihood of further grant support required to finalise installations in the least commercial or feasibly difficult sites. Once grant funding was exhausted, the concession would be self-reliant for expansion as demand for charging increased.

An initial one year and 5 year plan, with annual refresh, would be provided by the contractor/concessionaire, allowing annual review of progress and expected outcomes. This would be reviewed by Rotherham Council and then agreed. The contractor/concessionaire would be responsible, in collaboration with the delivery Officer(s), for carrying out comprehensive stakeholder consultation and communication exercises. This would also provide an opportunity for Councillor consultations to be undertaken. An update would be included as part of the Climate Emergency Annual Cabinet report, looking backwards at the success of delivery and also looking forwards to the future years' plan.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the inclusion of the Rotherham Borough within the regional South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funded programme and Rotherham Council's role in its procurement and delivery.
2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director, Property and Facilities Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy and relevant Ward Members for the approval of any contracts or conditions (including for the use of Council land and property) as well as the delivery, monitoring and site approvals in relation to the SYMCA LEVI Fund.

96. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

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

97. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

That the next meeting of the Cabinet be held on Monday, 19th January, 2026, commencing at 10.00 a.m.