

Background to the Budget and Financial Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 The Council is split into five directorates, each made up of number of services and teams. The five directorates are:

- Adult Care, Housing and Public Health;
- Children and Young People's Service
- Regeneration and Environment
- Corporate Services
- Policy, Strategy and Engagement

This appendix summarises the activity being undertaken in each Directorate in the current year and the planned activity that will be undertaken in 2025/26 as part of the proposed budget.

2. Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

2.1 Adult Care

2.1.1 Adult Care is responsible for the provision of adult social care support for Care Act eligible adults in the borough, including older people and adults with mental ill-health, people with a learning disability and autism and physical and/or sensory impairments. The Directorate also supports people with housing and support requirements through housing related support and vulnerable adults experiencing multiple disadvantages as well as domestic abuse. The Directorate has been and continues to be at the forefront of the Council's response to safeguarding adults, supporting hospital discharges and maximising the independence of residents with care and support needs. The Directorate also has a key role in supporting the wider health and care system and externally commissions providers such as care homes, home care, supported living and voluntary sector partners including micro-enterprises, to deliver critical support.

2.1.2 Adult Care has statutory responsibility under the Care Act 2014 for managing and delivering:

- Information, advice and guidance
- Advocacy
- Prevention and recovery
- Safeguarding
- Assessment and support planning
- Care at home and in residential settings
- Managing provider failure
- Regulated care services
- As well as statutory responsibility under the Mental Health Act for the 24-hour provision of the Approved Mental Health Professionals.

2.1.3 The Directorate continues to face significant challenges because of changes in population demographics. There is a sustained budget pressure linked to an ageing population and a rising population of working age adults with long term health and care needs. Concurrently, increased acuity, multiple disadvantage and complexity of need and increased cost pressures for externally commissioned adult care providers are further compounding this position. The associated costs and increased risk faced by externally commissioned providers, has highlighted the need for the Directorate to respond with an aligned budget strategy to support sustainable fee increases.

2.1.4 The focus for 2026/27 is to continue to address the need to respond to the rising numbers of people with eligible and increasing care needs, seeking more preventative approaches which reduce the need for more intensive long-term support. This includes working with health and social care partners, to ensure support is personalised, responsive and cost effective.

2.1.5 Quality of care will continue to be a priority and improved through partnership working across the health and care system in the borough, which has strong, collaborative foundations. The Council will continue to have a key role in supporting the transition to wider system integration which will be partly achieved through the neighbourhood health pilot sites, for which Rotherham was successful. This will enable a proactive response to reforms of the NHS, to ensure place priorities, population health management and tackling health inequalities remain at the heart of our local offer. These areas form the cornerstone of regulation for Adult Social Care, and the department are currently awaiting their outcome report following inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in 2025.

2.1.6 Supporting people to live well at home, for as long as possible, continues to remain a key focus, with home first principles at the core of the delivery model. This approach improves quality of life for residents, while reducing cost. This will be achieved through continued investment in preventative care and increased use of emerging technology, to reduce acute and long-term interventions; access to appropriate, co-ordinated support including more effective support for working age adults; and personalised care delivered by skilled care workers and through new technology.

2.1.7 Adult Social Care remains committed to transforming how it meets people's needs creatively and innovatively. During 2026, this will include the opening of our new day opportunities service for people with a learning disability, autism and high support needs, as well as new supported living facilities. Similarly, with health partners, the Council will continue to build on its Transforming Care Hub at Rotherham Hospital, which enables people to be discharged from hospital safely and to the right care setting.

2.1.8 This can only be achieved if there is a high quality, motivated social care workforce in place. Adult Social Care have invested in a comprehensive workforce development plan and robust practice frameworks, which build skills and confidence in assessments and delivery of cost-effective strength-

based outcomes. This commitment to ongoing change and development in the way services and resources are organised will assist Adult Care to manage and deliver the support it provides.

- 2.1.9 Supporting the internal and external care workforce will continue to be a key focus in the coming year, with processes in place to support staff and to ensure that staff working remotely, as well as those in front facing delivery roles, have access to the right resources and equipment they need to discharge their duties effectively and safely.
- 2.1.10 Recruitment and retention of workers in the Adult Care Sector continues to present significant challenges for the borough, broadly in line with the national position. Actions to address this have been put in place during 2025/26 which has realised positive impacts with our vacancy position reducing dramatically within our locality assessment teams. However, actions will continue during 2026/27 for those roles within our mental health, learning disability and autism teams, where there has been a slower reduction in the vacancy rate. Actions will include targeted recruitment campaigns and continued promotion of the care sector as a career.
- 2.1.11 These priorities are designed to deliver a long term, sustainable reduction in demand pressures facing the directorate, ensure compliance with regulatory standards and delivery of services within the allocated budget.

2.2 **Public Health**

- 2.2.1 Public Health is an integral element of the borough's health and social care system, maintaining a focus on prevention, physical and mental wellbeing and tackling health inequalities. Working closely with commissioning colleagues the team is responsible for the commissioning of statutory public health services, including sexual health services; drug and alcohol treatment and recovery; 0-19 Public Health nursing; NHS Health Checks and Rotherham Healthwave, which comprises weight management and stop smoking services.
- 2.2.2 Alongside commissioning services, Public Health lead on the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which underpins the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The team plays a pivotal role in providing intelligence, evidence-based advice, advocacy and challenge to ensure that the health of residents is safeguarded and to enable all partners to meet their duties in tackling health inequalities within the borough. The Team provides specialist public health advice across the domains of Health Protection, Health Improvement and Healthcare Public Health for the Rotherham system and provide strategic leadership to maximise Public Health outcomes within the borough. This includes leadership of the Rotherham Place Prevention and Health Inequalities Group, Rotherham's Combatting Drugs Partnership, the Moving Rotherham Partnership, the Rotherham Tobacco Control Alliance, the Rotherham Food Network, the Suicide Prevention Strategic Group and the Sexual Health Partnership. Through these forums and other roles public

health advice is provided to the NHS, other Council Directorates, schools, workplaces and social care providers to support health improvement across the borough.

2.2.3 Life expectancy at birth in Rotherham for males is 1.3 years below the England average and for females is 2.1 years below the England average (2022-2024), which is indicative of a range of health inequalities in the borough. This is further demonstrated by a difference in life expectancy of over twelve years for males and ten years for females between the borough's most and least deprived communities (2021-2023). The borough has higher smoking prevalence at 13.5% in adults, and lower levels of physical activity in adults at 58.8%, compared to the national average (10.4% and 67.4% respectively, 2024) which also correspond with local patterns of deprivation. These along with the associated health gap contribute to lower levels of economic productivity in the borough demonstrating the strong links between prosperity and health.

2.3 **Housing Services**

2.3.1 Housing Services work across the organisation, and with our communities and stakeholders, to develop and deliver against the Council's Housing Strategy for the Borough. The service holds overall landlord responsibility for the management and maintenance of the borough's 20,000 council homes. They provide information, advice and guidance on the housing options and support available to residents and facilitate adaptations to homes, as required by residents e.g. for accessibility/health reasons. Housing Services are also responsible for delivering the programme of new, affordable, high quality Council homes in the borough. In addition, the service works with housing associations and housing developers to deliver a range of new homes to meet the Borough's housing needs and delivery targets.

2.3.2 The service will continue to ensure that a robust, sustainable Housing Revenue Account 30-year Business Plan is in place. The effective delivery of this plan will ensure that the borough's 20,000 council homes are maintained effectively, meet the decent homes standard and continue to deliver an ambitious programme of new homes in the Borough to meet future demands. This will be achieved by building on council owned sites and acquiring new homes from private developers through Section 106 agreements and through market acquisitions.

2.3.3 The General Fund budget will continue to be used to prevent, reduce and relieve homelessness and deliver aids and adaptations to private homes.

2.3.4 Efficiencies will continue to be delivered by sustaining tenancies and supporting tenants in financial difficulties, high performance on void turnaround times; rent recovery and leasehold income collection. Alongside this, the future of the repairs and maintenance service, and other key landlord services, is being reviewed in light of contract break clauses and new regulatory requirements.

2.3.5 The homelessness service has seen demand increase significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to increased hotel usage. However, successful grant funding applications and improvements in the operation of homelessness and temporary accommodation services has successfully contributed to addressing budget pressures in this area.

3 Children and Young People's Services

3.1 The Directorate for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) is responsible for early help and family engagement, the youth justice service, social care services, education and inclusion. It has a statutory responsibility for the safeguarding of children and young people and is supported by a dedicated performance, quality, commissioning and business support team.

3.2 Nationally, children's social care services are operating in a challenging budget and demand context. There has been an unprecedented surge in demand for children's social care support in recent years - a trend that shows no signs of abating and continues to see a rise in children in care across the region. This has been mirrored by the continuing significant demands across the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) landscape, resulting in stretched resources and budget pressures nationally.

3.3 Against the national trend, Rotherham's improvements in social care have positively impacted on reducing the number of Children in Care (CiC), those subject to Child Protection plans and Children in Need. The reduced demand has been supported through ongoing improvements to Early Help through the Family Help Strategy, the stability and improved practice of the CSC workforce, Family Group Conferencing, Family Network meetings, a comprehensive suite of evidence-based programmes and partnership working via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and community-based teams. There continues to be a steady number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in our care system, with a higher percentage accepted via the Governments National Transfer Scheme, and the resultant implications for our Care Leaver population. There are 17 Unaccompanied Children and 87 Former UASC Care Leavers as of December 2025.

3.4 This has been underlined by the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services in November 2025. This was the first judgement Inspection in three years and determined an Overall Effectiveness grade of Outstanding for the Service. This is a significant achievement and external recognition of the quality of practice and strategic leadership that have led to consistently improved outcomes for our children and young people.

3.5 Rotherham continues to receive Family Hubs and Start for Life funding, and this has now been extended permanently across the country for all Local Authorities by the Department for Education. This funding has added value to existing provision with programmes such as Solihull being introduced in the Borough. Additional collaboration and co-location across the public, community and voluntary sector in Rotherham has been enabled and is now

providing swifter access to services for children and families. The Service is reviewing the last four years of the programme and will present a refreshed offer in the spring.

- 3.6 The Department for Education is now responsible for the Supporting Families Programme and has ended the payments by results scheme. Going forward, the grant will be subsumed into a consolidated Child and Youth Grant along with other key funding allocations (e.g. Children Social care Prevention grant, Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) grant, etc). All the allocated monies for RMBC will be delivered this financial year and continue to expect a focus on an outcomes framework that helps families combat problems such as financial insecurity, unemployment, risk of homelessness and educational inequality.
- 3.7 In 2026/27 the Directorate priorities are to continue to sustain improvements across Children's Services, through ongoing development and implementation of the Families First Partnership Programme via our Family Help services, supporting children and families from the earliest point of need in conjunction with partners through to the most specialist services when required; to respond to the Schools White Paper on SEND reform that will reset SEND expectations across the system; to continue building in-borough capacity for Children in Care through the ongoing Residential Care Home programme and Foster Care offer; additional provision for children with learning difficulties and disabilities; and to continue to further develop interventions and services designed to better support children and families earlier.
- 3.8 The education and inclusion skills service operating model is now embedded which incorporates key strategic education forums and boards and groups including Schools Forum, Rotherham's Strategic Education Partnership, schools' leadership groups, Rotherham's Area SEND and Alternative Provision Partnership Board and SEND Executive Board. School facing services are continually reviewed to ensure that they are efficient and effective, whilst continuing to improve educational outcomes, particularly at in the Early Years, Key Stage 4, disadvantaged groups and for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities SEND.
- 3.9 The SEND local area partnership continues to take action to improve of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans and waiting times for some health services. The new quality assurance (QA) framework is in place, and the quality of EHC plans is improving. Meeting the 18-week target for children and young people (CYP) across these health services remains a significant challenge; however, dedicated workstreams are addressing the issues. The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy is improving outcomes and services for children with SEND
- 3.10 Work continues to manage the High Needs Budget within the constraints of the Safety Valve Agreement, which is now showing a projected overspend at the end of March 2026 of £3.7M. Despite close alignment to the milestones of the Agreement, including the commitment of DfE funding to enhance the

provision at Newman Special School, the nature of the national SEND system and the increasing number of EHCPs awarded to children has meant that the original financial projections can no longer be met. Investment in SEND Sufficiency continues to enhance SEND education provision and support transformation across the borough as evidenced in the Inspection outcome, and this includes continued focused investments, creating additional SEND places in Rotherham which enhance education outcomes for this cohort

- 3.11 Both Children in Care and Child Protection numbers have continued to reduce over the year and are now at quite stable levels. Focus is on step down plans to support children in care to move to permanent care arrangements, return home safely or transition into independent provision as Care Leavers. Work is underway to address the themes of the Families First programme including a significant emphasis on family group decision making and the development of service user voice and co-production activity. This will include a focus on kinship care arrangements and further exploration of regional initiatives. Further guidance has also just been published in relation to multi-agency child protection arrangements, and this will be considered by the Rotherham Safeguarding Partnership Executive over the coming months.
- 3.12 The introduction 30 hours of free childcare for children over 9 months old with working parents has significantly increase the workload for local authorities. The Council manages and distributes £43 million of grant funding to enable parents to access early education and childcare.
- 3.13 In 2025/26 the Council distributed £2.3M of programme funding to schools to expand wraparound care for children and young people. This funding has now ended and in 2026/27 the Council will be supporting schools to sustain wraparound care to children and young people funded by the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme. The Government has set new targets for children to achieve a good level of development before they start Year 1 of primary schools. Working to achieve these targets will mean increased staffing and resources in the early years.
- 3.14 The continued favourable comparison of numbers of children in care to statistical neighbours is linked to the impact of the Demand and Market Management Strategies. The challenge from a budget perspective is the increasing cost of individual placements, especially for those children and young people with complex needs.

4 Regeneration and Environment

- 4.1 The Regeneration and Environment Directorate's focus is to develop and promote Rotherham as a good place to live, work and visit; with emphasis on delivering against the Council Plan priorities and the Year Ahead commitments. The Directorate has been successful in continuing to secure and deliver significant external funding, linked to the priorities and building upon the Council's own investments. A key part of the work for 2025/26, and

into future years, is to deliver these projects and programmes as well as delivering services for residents, businesses and visitors.

- 4.2 The Directorate has a broad portfolio of responsibilities including:
 - Community safety
 - Environmental protection
 - Licensing
 - Waste collection, management and disposal
 - Street cleaning and grounds maintenance
 - Parks, countryside and green spaces
 - Leisure, sport and physical activity
 - Tourism and visitor economy
 - Culture and events
 - Children's Capital of Culture
 - Heritage, museums, arts and archives
 - Libraries and neighbourhood Hubs
 - Planning and Building Control
 - Regeneration and Economic Development
 - Transport, highways, drainage and flood alleviation
 - Emergency Planning, Business Continuity
 - Passenger Transport and Fleet Services
- 4.3 The Directorate's budget is focussed on the delivery of frontline services to ensure the borough's neighbourhoods are clean, safe and inclusive, to create an environment where people want to live, work and play. In addition, the Directorate has a significant Capital budget consisting of Council funding and funding from external sources.
- 4.4 The adopted Town Centre Masterplan is being implemented, with a number of Public Realm improvements completed including Bridgegate, College Street and Frederick Street. A new scheme is underway on Corporation Street, with further public realm improvements to follow on Effingham Street. Council-led housing developments are now completed within the town centre, establishing the market for future private-led schemes. There is already seeing evidence of this happening with an increase in the number of planning applications for housing development. The Council has also made further progress this year on acquiring new sites for residential development. The town's landscape is continuing to change, with the Forge Island leisure development now completed, with Arc Cinema and Travelodge open, and three restaurants and cafés also now open.
- 4.5 Work is also well underway on the £40m redevelopment of the Markets and a new Central Library – the latter is set to open in Autumn 2026. The former Wilko unit was purchased and demolished and 3-7 Corporation Street buildings have also been purchased and demolished in preparation for future development.
- 4.6 The Council's work on flood mitigation continues which will see further schemes at Whiston Brook, Eel Mires Dike and Kilnhurst brought to a 'shovel

ready status' by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. Further funding has been made available by the Council to support delivery and construction of the project at Whiston Brook, with works commencing on site in Spring 2026. A scheme has also been identified and funding made available for potential mitigation for the Catcliffe area following the devastating impacts of Storm Babet in October 2023.

- 4.7 The Council now operates 5 successful business centres, following the opening of the £5.4m Century 2 Business Centre in Manvers. In total across the 5 hubs the Council now offer 156 office, 84 workshops, 12 meeting rooms, and 2 lab spaces. The centres are strategically located across the borough and are really successful, with over 150 businesses, supporting over 800 jobs. Around 80% of our businesses survive at least 3 years, with over 40% of businesses graduating out to occupy local commercial space. We see occupancy levels of c85% across the business centres. Supporting people into employment has also been a focus this year with the publication of a new Employment and Skills Strategy and the commencement of 'Pathways to Work', supporting people who are economically inactive back into the workplace.
- 4.8 Projects have progressed as part of the £31.6m that was secured from the Towns Fund to carry out ambitious regeneration projects across the town centre, Parkgate/Eastwood and Templeborough. Major regeneration projects are in development in Dinnington and Wath Town Centres, totalling just under £20m. This year has seen the completion of the Compulsory Purchase of land Dinnington, enabling the project to commence in 2026/27. This is in addition to the £39.41m secured via the Government's Pathfinder programme, further bolstering the town centre regeneration programme as well as developing the leisure economy and skills. This year the Council has completed major developments at Rother Valley and Thrybergh Country Parks to improve our Green Spaces and to further develop the growing visitor economy.
- 4.9 The Highways Service has made huge progress in improving the standard of roads having recently been awarded a Green rating by the Department of Transport for the work on filling pot holes – one of only two in Yorkshire to do so. New investment this year has also gone into street scene and community protection work. An additional team has been employed since October 2025 to undertake roadside cleaning with a focus on rural roads and also main gateway locations. The new Street Safe team became operational in the town centre from December in the town centre providing additional enforcement activity and also providing a support to the public greater re-assurance. This work will expand into the other main high street locations in the borough in the New Year.
- 4.10 The Council's cultural and leisure sites and venues continue to be popular with residents and visitors alike, reaching over 4m visits and with customer satisfaction ratings averaging over 90%. Waleswood Caravan and Camping site remains in the Top 3 best campsites in the country and Clifton Park Museum received Full Accreditation status from the Arts Council in December 2025 showing that it had met the national quality standards. This provides

assurance over organisational health, the quality of the collections and the service provided to users.

- 4.11 The Council was again successful in delivering the annual Rotherham Show over two days in September, reaching over 90,000 people. Events such as Uplift skate and arts festival, Plug In and Play, and the Christmas Lights Switch-On brought in over 55,000 visitors to Rotherham town centre.
- 4.12 The Council and its partners successfully delivered Children's Capital of Culture, in collaboration with local young people. The first season got off to a flying start with events such as Otherham, Signals and Roots Street Carnival. The programme continued through the year with diverse range of activities in primary, secondary and special schools, Rotherham Opera at Magna, a traineeship programme which has worked with more than 120 young people to date and an Arts Award programme which has enabled 250 young people to achieve accreditation which helps with accessing university, further training or employment. It is expected that by the end of the Children's Capital of Culture programme, over 400,000 people will have engaged with it as either active participants or audience Members.
- 4.13 Libraries welcomed increasing numbers of new customers to courses, clubs and classes, and continue to receive high satisfaction ratings from customers. It is clear that they provide a valued community resource, although book borrowing is decreasing, in line with national trends. However, the Summer Reading Challenge was another success in 2025. The Council will consult on a new Library Strategy in 2026 in particular looking at what people want from their Libraries and how they can contribute to increasing reading levels.
- 4.14 Green Spaces secured 4 Green Flags for parks at Clifton, Greasbrough, Rother Valley and Ulley. Visitors to parks continued to enjoy these important local habitats as well as participate on many nature-themed workshops and other events from the National Open Water Swimming Championships to Bonfire Night.
- 4.15 The Museums Arts and Heritage Service has engaged with local communities through its temporary exhibitions programme, particularly 'Self' as part of the Children's Capital of Culture festival year. This year also saw the Council support the visit of the Royal Horticultural Society for its summer flower show at Wentworth Woodhouse, bringing huge numbers of visitors to the borough.

5 Corporate Services

- 5.1 Corporate Services supports the delivery of front-line Council services that are delivered by its own and other directorates by promoting the most effective use of resources whilst ensuring services are compliant with Council regulation and national legislation. The Corporate Services provide leadership, influence, advice and a cross-cutting perspective to enable the Council to operate effectively. They are responsible for providing effective support and advice to all Council services to help ensure they function

efficiently; and to support elected members in making informed and lawful decisions.

5.2 They also deliver a number of direct front line and customer facing services such as the Council's Contact Centre, Revenues and Benefits, and the delivery of school meals, cleaning and school crossing patrols.

5.3 The Directorate provides services split into the following six areas:

1. Financial Services
 - i. Finance, Accounting, Insurance
 - ii. Local Taxation, Housing Benefit, Income Collection and Financial Assessments for care services
 - iii. Procurement
2. Legal Services
 - i. Legal
 - ii. Elections
 - iii. Registration and Bereavement
3. Customer, Information and Digital Services
 - i. ICT
 - ii. Customer Services
 - iii. Information Management
4. Property and Facilities Services
 - i. Property Services
 - ii. Facilities Management
 - iii. Catering & Cleaning, School Crossing Patrols
5. Human Resources and Organisational Development
 - i. Human Resources
 - ii. Organisational Development
 - iii. Health and Safety
6. Internal Audit

5.4 The Directorate is committed to providing outstanding, high quality professional support services that are valued by its customers, both internal and external. The directorate has a key role in ensuring effective governance arrangements are in place across the Council and encompasses a number of key statutory roles (Chief Finance Officer [S151 Officer], Monitoring Officer [MO] and Senior Information Reporting Officer [SIRO]. When Property and Facilities Services transferred to the directorate during 2024, it brought with it a responsibility for health and safety compliance in relation to Council buildings which has, since then, been on a substantial improvement journey, delivering considerable improvements in levels of assurance. During 2025/26 Corporate Health and Safety transferred to the Assistant Chief Executives Directorate under the leadership of the Assistant Director for Human Resources. This has subsequently all transferred into the new Corporate Services Directorate along with Human Resources and

5.5 Organisational Development from 1st January 2026. The work of key directorate professional support services has been critical to supporting the Council in the delivery of a number of major housing and regeneration projects as well as capital investments in schools, children's homes and other assets.

5.6 The department has continued to directly support households through delivery of various financial support schemes such as the energy crisis scheme and the Council Tax Support top up scheme whilst the faster payment arrangements that were put in place for local businesses, ensuring their cash flows continue to be supported during the current difficult economic times has remained in place to support businesses whilst the economy has remained uncertain.

5.7 Following on from the many online processes developed in recent years, improving Customer access to services continues to be a priority. The investment that was previously made in customer services telephone staffing has enabled a continued reduction in call wait times to around 4 minutes with further improvement only being temporarily curtailed due to the Waste disruption over the Summer of 2025/26 leading to increased demand over the phones. The delivery of increased online access to services remains a key focus for the year ahead to ensure an ongoing improved customer experience overall. Previously, many services didn't offer an online booking form and instead bookings were taken manually, and any charges were invoiced afterwards. However, over the last 2 years, 288 online forms have been created making the process much easier for the customer and more efficient for the Council.

5.8 The Revenues and Benefits service have once again performed well despite the challenges facing many Rotherham residents whose household finances have been stretched, and this supports the Council's budget overall. The delivery of Council funded support schemes and the careful and strategic use of various Government Grants over the last few years has enabled funding to be earmarked for over 14,000 households to once again receive additional Local Council Tax Support as the proposed budget continues this, providing much needed financial support to those households on the lowest incomes.

5.9 Within Property and Facilities Services, the work to review health and safety and compliance arrangements within Council owned buildings has settled into a more managed and planned arrangement with a high level of compliance providing significant assurances that both Council used operational buildings and Council owned community assets are safe and fit for purpose.

6 Policy, Strategy and Engagement Directorate

6.1 This directorate supports the democratic process by supporting elected members, Ward Members, liaises closely with the community and voluntary

sector and the Councils Partner organisations. It also advises on compliance with Council procedures and the Constitution.

6.2 The Directorate has four distinct areas of responsibility:

- Neighbourhoods
- Communications & Marketing
- Democratic Services
- Policy, Performance and Intelligence

6.3 The Directorate has continued to provide support to services across Council directorates, including facilitating the delivery and monitoring of Council priorities as set out in the Year Ahead Plan 2025-26, along with the new Council Plan 2025-30.

6.4 During 2025/26, the directorate has continued to play a pivotal role in the Council despite the departure of the Assistant Chief Executive part way through the year. Key deliverables include:

- Providing a reliable source of information to the public and the workforce in different formats, including regular neighbourhood e-bulletins.
- Continuing to take a lead role in the implementation of key strategic documents including the Council Plan and Year Ahead Delivery Plan, Social Value Policy, Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and Rotherham Together Partnership Plan along with developing a new Inclusion Strategy.
- Continuation of effective and accountable democratic decision making.
- Implementation of the Workforce Plan that aims to position the Council as an 'employer of choice', improving our attraction, retention and engagement methods and focuses on an engaged, diverse and skilled workforce.

6.5 The directorate has also continued to deliver its core provisions including internal and external communications and HR support functions. The directorate has also worked closely with all directorates to monitor and deliver the Council Plan. This has included developing a new Council Plan for 2025-30.

6.6 In the coming 12 months, the directorate will focus more on Policy, Strategy and Engagement, as its new name suggests. Key areas of focus will be to:

- Maintain high quality communication and information to residents, partners and the workforce.
- Provide oversight and quality assurance on progress against the new Council Plan priorities through effective reporting and monitoring of the Year Ahead Delivery Plan.

- Work to strengthen social value arrangements to maximise the impact of local spending power.
- Implement the new Inclusion Strategy.
- Update the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and continue to support Members in their Community Leadership role and build on our neighbourhood working model to develop a clearer and shared understanding of integrated locality working across the public sector.
- Seek to build on the current neighbourhood working model through more integrated, place-based working across Council services in localities.
- Enhance partnership working to achieve better outcomes across the borough through the ongoing delivery of the Rotherham Together Plan.
- Develop a strengthened approach to our development and use of business intelligence to build a clearer picture of the borough and its residents as well as informing decision-making and improving services for customers.
- Improve the Councils Complaints Handling processes in line with new Ombudsman requirements.