

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION  
Tuesday 27 January 2026**

Present:- Councillor McKiernan (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Ahmed, Allen, C. Carter, Jackson, Jones, Rashid, Sheppard, Taylor, Thorp and Tinsley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beck, Cowen, Lelliott and Stables and Mrs K. Bacon and Mrs M. Jacques.

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

**41. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2025**

**Resolved:-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 December 2025 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

**42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 45 (Flooding Alleviation Update) on the grounds that he was the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.

Additionally, in relation to Minute No. 45 (Flooding Alleviation Update), Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was the current RMBC representative on the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 46 (Thriving Neighbourhood Annual Report 2024-2025) on the grounds that he was the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.

**43. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

The Chair advised that there were no members of the public or representatives of media organisations present at the meeting and there were no questions in respect of matters on the agenda.

**44. 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 or public from the meeting.

**45. FLOODING ALLEVIATION UPDATE**

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces, introduced the item and commented that periods of bad weather often opened bad wounds for Rotherham residents whose homes had previously been flooded. One of the Council's highest priorities was to ensure the risk of flooding was reduced and that both residents' homes and the vital infrastructure they relied on, were protected.

Over the past year, the borough had experienced how damaging and destructive severe weather could be for communities. The Council's work to strengthen drainage systems, deliver targeted flood alleviation schemes, and improve long-term resilience remained essential.

The update to Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) would demonstrate the real, tangible progress made towards the following:-

- schemes already delivered that were reducing the risk of properties flooding;
- new systems that would improve how quickly the Council could respond during storms; and
- major projects that were moving into delivery phase that would provide greater protection for hundreds of households in the years ahead.

This significant programme of work spanned detailed engineering, community engagement, partnership working and long-term planning. Councillor Marshall expressed pride in the commitment shown across the service to keep people safe.

Richard Jackson, Head of Highways and Flood Risk, and Andy Saxton, Highway Asset & Drainage Manager, took members through the update presentation, highlighting the following points:-

- Storm Claudia in November 2025 had been a cause of anxiety for local residents and communities. The Council had received over 80 flood reports. The Rotherham River network was susceptible to flooding due to the convergence of the River Don and the River Rother. As a result, work had continued throughout the last 12 months on preparing major schemes.
- The Flooding Team had been involved in community engagement with councillors and local residents in the Catcliffe and Treeton area. For example, Hydro Sacks had been handed out, which could be used by local residents to protect against flooding.
- An explanation of projects that had been successfully delivered across the borough was provided, including:- a new Highway drain at Dale Hill Close, Maltby; a scheme to manage surface water at Waleswood Camp Site; and additional drainage and creation of a

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bund (an earth embankment) at New Road, Firbeck;

- Further drainage schemes, which would be funded via capital monies granted in 2024-25, were planned for the following sites:- Rockingham Road, Swinton; Main Street, Aughton; Meadow Bank Road, Meadow Bank; and Recreation Road, Wath:
- Work had been done and funding received from the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), to improve the flood resilience of 80 properties in Catcliffe via the installation of flood doors, flood barriers, air grates.
- As part of the Connected by Water partnership (comprising the four South Yorkshire local authorities, Yorkshire Water, the Environment Agency and the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority), work had been carried out to develop an integrated flood and water management plan. There had also been early involvement with Yorkshire Water to look at improvements to combined sewer overflows in the Rotherham area.
- A successful internship scheme had been completed in summer 2025, whereby four interns were employed for a six -week period and worked on the design of a specific scheme for Rotherham to improve drainage at a site in Swinton. As soon as funding was available for this drainage scheme, it would be implemented. Due to the success of the internship scheme, some additional local levy funding had been granted which had allowed service to create a two-year graduate scheme. This would allow the Council to employ six graduates on flood and water management and would commence in summer 2026.
- Work had been carried out to map all 49,000 road gullies in Rotherham, with one ward left to complete. The Council's highway asset management system was also in the process of being updated, with a new, publicly accessible dashboard system due to launch later in 2026. Three new jet vacuum vehicles had been purchased, which provided further capacity in cleaning gullies and septic tanks and clearing highway drainage systems.
- CCTV cameras had been erected in ten locations across the borough, which allowed service to look at high flooding hotspots and identify problems more quickly. It was hoped to expand this facility in other areas across the borough over the next 12 -18 months.
- In 2020, the council made available additional funding to look at flood alleviation schemes in areas that had suffered from flooding in 2019. As part of this, a culvert renewal programme was already underway, whereby cleansing and maintenance works had been carried out on pipes already in the ground, which would reduce

flood risks.

- There were six priority flood alleviation schemes across the borough, for which summaries and updates were provided:-
  - 1) **Rotherham Renaissance** – this scheme aimed to provide resilience to susceptible areas where the River Don flows through central Rotherham communities. A design in principle had been completed to increase the size of the river walls with sheet piling;
  - 2) **Parkgate & Rawmarsh** – these areas suffered from flooding caused by watercourses coming in three directions . An outline design to alleviate the problems had been completed and funding was being sought to commence work;
  - 3) **Eel Mires Dike. Laughton Common** – repeated flooding had been experienced here since the early 2000s. The proposed scheme here would attenuate (store) the water outside of the villages to regulate the flow and divert it away from residential areas. Two large flood reservoirs were planned, and negotiations had commenced with a number of landowners in the area;
  - 4) **Catcliffe Pumping Station** – a permanent pumping station was proposed for times when the height of the River Rother increases, to replace the work of six mobile pumps which were often deployed to this area;
  - 5) **Catcliffe & Treeton Bridge Replacement** – delivery of a new bridge here would reduce flooding in this area. The existing bridge had been in situ since the 1920s and the new bridge would have a higher bridge deck which should allow more capacity for water to pass under it; and
  - 6) **Whiston Brook** – this scheme involved plans to store water in a reservoir during high levels of rainfall and then allow it back into the existing channel as demand allowed. There would be a control element to allow water flow back into the existing Whiston Brook. Currently, 50 properties were at risk from flooding in this area.

The Chair invited members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the Flooding Alleviation Update and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:-

Councillor Adair asked when work was due to be started on the bridge replacement at Catcliffe, commenting that he was aware that works of this type could take years. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk confirmed that the Council hoped to soon be able to award a contract to a design

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and build contractor. The original ambition had been to build the bridge replacement in three years. However, working on the River Rother would be challenging and would require permissions from the Environment Agency, which could be a slow process. It was hoped that the Council would have a design ready to show to local residents approximately one year after award of the tender and work would be done with the Environment Agency to reduce timescales as much as possible.

Councillor Thorp enquired whether, following approval of an additional £3 million of funding from Cabinet recently, the scheme at Whiston Brook was fully funded and when works would commence. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk confirmed that the tender process had been completed, and it was hoped that the tender award would be made within the next couple of weeks. The preferred contractor had provided a proposed programme of works, but a lot of background work would need to be done with the Environment Agency before the contractor could go on site. It was hoped that works would be able to commence in April 2026 with a projected delivery period up to early 2027.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Thorp asked for assurances that sewerage would not be allowed into the attainment area at Whiston Brook. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk highlighted areas of the technical drawings that explained how the scheme had been set up to deal with all the water courses and surface water upstream that fed into the scheme. There was the potential for foul discharge from the Worrygoose pumping station, but arrangements were being made to manage that. It was not anticipated that there would be any foul discharges into the system.

The Chair asked whether issues with the relevant landowners on the Whiston Brook scheme had been agreed. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk confirmed that heads of terms had recently been agreed with a landowner, and the land should have been acquired by the time that works were due to commence on site.

Councillor Jackson asked if more detail could be provided on the work to be carried out at Recreation Road in Wath and what timescales were involved. The Highway Asset & Drainage Manager commented that an outline design had been prepared for this area but that it would need further consideration, especially considering that it had flooded again that day, due to high rainfall. It would be important to ensure that as one problem was solved, another one was not created somewhere else. Investigations would continue to reach the best solution for the area. It was confirmed that funding was available for this project.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Jackson enquired whether the Council had ever considered installing automatic barriers to close roads subject to frequent flooding, of which he was aware there were some in the Doncaster area. The Highway Asset & Drainage Manager explained that this was not something the Council had considered previously due to

the high cost involved and challenges of traffic layouts.

The Chair asked how footage from the CCTV cameras was monitored. The Highway Asset & Drainage Manager confirmed that there were several tablets where the footage could be viewed at operational depots and at Riverside House. As soon as there was a weather warning, the tablets would be closely monitored. The Chair further enquired whether the CCTV cameras were able to clearly record footage at night. It was confirmed that they could as the areas around had good street lighting. The cameras could also be manipulated from the tablets so could be rotated to provide a 360° view. There was the capacity to increase the use of cameras to other areas if concerns increased, and the CCTV had enabled service to react more quickly to issues when identified.

Councillor Tinsley enquired about the functionality of the new highway maintenance system (Aurora). Would the system record when gullies were last cleaned? The Head of Highways and Flood Risk confirmed that the system would provide information on when teams had last been out to clean the gullies and would display the programme of delivery going forward. It was explained that through the process, a further 4,000 road gullies had been identified, which had created challenges. Members were encouraged to signpost residents to the dashboard.

Councillor Tinsley also asked if the arrival of the three new jet vacuum vehicles would increase the frequency of road gully cleaning? The Highway Asset & Drainage Manager confirmed that service was moving towards a risk-based approach with regard to gully cleaning, with the aim of cleansing every gully at least once a year. In reality, in some flooding hotspots, gullies were cleansed once a month. Information held on the new dashboard would enable service to target resources more effectively. Councillor Tinsley commented that caution would be required on the risk-based approach as a similar approach had caused issues with regard to bin collections. The Highway Asset & Drainage Manager commented that the tablets could record three years' worth of information on gullies so there would be a significant amount of data available to support the appropriate targeting of resources.

Councillor Taylor asked for an update on the water regulator at Woodhouse Mill, which historically, had an impact on the Catcliffe area. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk explained that the River Rother had three different regulators which were operated by the Environment Agency. Where the rivers Rother and Don converge, these regulators were used as storage areas to move the flows into low-lying land in order to avoid a large volume of water heading towards Rotherham town centre. At the time of the floods in Catcliffe & Treeton in 2023, one of the regulators hadn't been in operation and the Environment Agency had been required to do an extensive hydraulic modelling exercise to demonstrate that the flooding would not have been so significant, had the regulator been working. The Canklow regulator had recently been replaced, there was another regulator at Rother Valley Country Park, but

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the third regulator at Woodhouse Mill was currently not operational and the Environment Agency was looking into what needed to be done to fix it. Service was satisfied from the information provided by the Environment Agency that investments were being made in the continuing operation of the three regulators, which would contribute to protecting areas such as Catcliffe & Treeton and Rotherham town centre.

Councillor Jones raised a point relating to the earlier idea of installing flood barriers on certain roads susceptible to flooding and commented that if this was to be considered, signs would need to be installed sufficiently far in advance of the barriers to avoid unnecessary detours.

Councillor Jones also asked if officers were aware of any Yorkshire Water scheme currently ongoing at Droppingwell. Markings had appeared and surveys had been carried out on this road within the past week. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk confirmed that they were not aware of any specific current works but would make enquiries with Yorkshire Water and provide further information. Officers were aware that the pumping station at Droppingwell had previously experienced issues where the rising main had broken and lead to unexpected foul discharge in the area.

Councillor Adair expressed concern that the proposed bridge replacement works at Catcliffe could render residents in Treeton cut off for a significant period of time, and asked what plans were in place to address this. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk explained that improvements to footpaths were being considered to enhance pedestrian access, along with improvements to the flow of traffic out of Treeton. Officers and the Cabinet Member had recently met with residents to hear the concerns of the community. Minimising disruption to communities was a priority and there was the potential for the bridge deck to be constructed elsewhere and then dropped into place, which would enable the existing bridge to remain in place for longer.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Adair asked for further detail on plans to install traffic lights at the Aughton crossroads. The Highway Asset & Drainage Manager explained that temporary traffic lights at this location were being considered as part of the work to divert traffic when the bridge was closed. However, it was also possible that traffic flow in this area could decrease when the bridge was closed, as less traffic could come off Sheffield Parkway and down into the area. Work on traffic modelling was being done with SYMCA and temporary measures could be put in place at suitable locations to try and ease traffic flow. The priority with the contractor would be to minimise the time the bridge was closed to enable the communities at Catcliffe and Treeton to be reconnected as soon as possible.

The Chair referred back to work carried out with DEFRA to install flood resilience measures to properties in Catcliffe and Treeton. Service had commented in the presentation that the cost had outweighed the £5,000 per property provided by DEFRA and the Chair asked by how much? The

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Highway Asset & Drainage Manager explained that DEFRA had first provided a grant of this nature in 2019, but when it was provided again following the floods in 2023, the grant amount did not increase. Each property had to be surveyed to ascertain what measures should be installed, so this cost also had to be covered.

In an additional question, the Chair asked whether the interns who took part in the successful summer scheme would be invited back to see their work in action, if their project was to come to fruition. The Highway Asset & Drainage Manager confirmed that the interns would be kept informed of how the project progressed and would be welcome to apply for the new graduate scheme. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk commented that the scheme had been valuable in making the students more aware of the opportunities available for engineers to work within local authorities. It was felt that the investment in the graduate programme would help the Council to develop new talent.

Councillor Carter asked how service anticipated managing the contract for the bridge construction, given that delays were frequently experienced on projects of this scale. The Head of Highways and Flood Risk explained that the main unresolved issue with the bridge replacement plan was the strength of the existing footings. If the existing footings and foundations were fit for purpose and could be used for the new bridge deck, this could speed up the process. However, if they were deemed to be unsuitable and more substantial footings were required, this would be a more protracted piece of work, which would involve de-watering the area. These uncertainties had led to caution in quoting projected timescales. It was recognised that communication and relationships with local residents would be key and frequent drop-in meetings would be arranged with the contractor in due course, to keep people up to date.

The Chair thanked officers for their input and members for the questions asked.

### **Resolved:-**

1. That the contents of the Flooding Alleviation Update and appendices be noted.

(Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 45 (Flooding Alleviation Update) on the grounds that he was the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.)

(Additionally, in relation to Minute No. 45 (Flooding Alleviation Update), Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest on the grounds that he was the current RMBC representative on the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.)

46. **THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025**

At the Chair's invitation, Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods, introduced the item, and commented that members lived the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy (Strategy) in their day-to-day work representing their constituents and worked to deliver it via their ward plans and priorities.

The Strategy had initially been approved in 2018 and was updated and refreshed in 2022. The Strategy was due to be refreshed and renewed again in 2026 and the Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that discussions were taking place with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive about how to progress with a new strategy.

The Strategy played a key part in the delivery of the strategic outcomes under the Council Plan but particularly, that "*places are thriving, safe and clean*". The Head of Neighbourhoods expressed pride in the collaborative work of the Council, the Neighbourhoods Teams and ward members during the lifetime of the Strategy and referred to the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review in 2023, which had praised the exemplary approach of the Council to community engagement. The success of this model was also due to the important work that wider services across the Council had provided to support delivery of local ward priorities.

The Head of Neighbourhoods took members through the update presentation, highlighting the following points, which demonstrated the breadth and depth of support for members on the neighbourhood working model:-

- **Member development and support** - The Neighbourhoods Team had facilitated up to 250 ward briefings over the 2024-25 municipal year. This period also covered the induction programme delivered to newly elected members after the May 2024 local elections, which helped to provide members with some knowledge and background to their wards. The member development programme was continually provided by the Member Support team within Democratic Services.
- **Ward priorities and plans** - A summary of the priorities and plans for all wards was provided at Appendix 3 of the Report. The Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that during spring/summer 2026, the Neighbourhoods Team would be speaking to all members about updating and refreshing their ward priorities, as they head into the second half of their four-year term of office. Ward data, advice and input from Council services and external partners, along with local community intelligence, would be used to develop and update ward priorities.
- **Ward budgets** - At the beginning of 2024, over £1 million pounds

had been available for projects, initiatives, activities and enhanced services to tackle ward priorities. In the financial year 2024-25, £275,116 of this was spent, which was less than when last reported. This was largely explained by the fact that it been the first year of members' four-year term office where they had been settling into their roles. The amount of spend was expected to increase over subsequent years as ward projects, services and activities continued to develop. £62,000 had been allocated to some 160 community groups within the Voluntary & Community Sector across the borough. The remaining budget from that initial £1 million would be carried over into the 2025-26 financial year.

- **Community engagement** – Work would continue on refreshing and updating individual ward web pages. The Neighbourhoods landing page on the Council website had received 4,826 unique views. There had been a small increase in subscribers to ward eBulletins and the engagement rate (measured via clicks on the links) for eBulletins was high, at 76%. Work was being carried out by the Communications Team to check the continued accuracy of these subscriptions and also, to produce a survey of readership to improve the content and accessibility of the eBulletins.
- **Support for community organisations** – Figures around the support provided for community groups via advice, signposting, support for events and direct funding for projects from ward budgets were provided. The important work of the Parish Council & Neighbourhoods Liaison Officer was also highlighted, a role unique to Rotherham. Work had been ongoing with the 31 Parish Councils over the last 12-18 months to update the joint working agreements between them and the Council.
- **Town centre working** – The Neighbourhoods Team had a responsibility to promote placemaking in the town centre and to bring all key stakeholders together and this work was primarily driven by the Town Centre Community Coordinator. The most demanding areas of focus were currently, anti-social behaviour and community safety. The Town Centre Community Coordinator had been working closely with the newly launched Street Safe Team around the town centre and the principal towns. The Town Centre Strategic Group was also working with officers in Regeneration & Environment on the development of a new Town Centre Action Plan and with regard to the £20 million of funding coming to the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods under the government's Pride in Place scheme. Over the last 12 months, consultation had taken place with the relevant local communities. The new Neighbourhoods Team would also work closely with the Neighbourhood Board that would oversee delivery of the Pride in Place programme.
- **Looking forward** – Out of the 2023 LGA peer review, came a

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recommendation to continue to build on the neighbourhood working model and develop a clear and shared understanding of integrated working across the public sector. In response to that, the Council had set up a Locality Working Board, with representation from senior council officers, South Yorkshire Police and the NHS. This board had overseen the strengthening of the North, Central and South Locality Managers Groups who were now responsible for the delivery of the Selective Licencing Neighbourhood Development & Improvement plans. The board would also be involved in the National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme, where Rotherham would be part of a national change programme aiming to deliver NHS services closer to communities. With the support of the Locality Working Board, a programme of training on strengths-based working had been delivered to officers and members, to strengthen methods of consultation and community engagement and the co-production of services.

The Chair invited members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2024-25, and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:-

Councillor Thorp asked a question around the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies of £120,000 that had been received in Sitwell ward. This had been shared amongst the entire ward, part of which was parished, even though the development the CIL money was attached to was outside of the parished area. Councillor Thorp understood that if the CIL money had been in relation to an area within a parish boundary, the Parish Council would be entitled to keep the entire sum but asked for confirmation of this.

In response, the Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that this was correct, and a Parish Council was legally allowed for to retain CIL monies paid to it in relation to a development within the parish boundary, without sharing it amongst the wider ward community. In this instance, members could choose to approach the Parish Council to discuss distribution of the funds.

Councillor Tinsley queried whether the figure quoted in Appendix 2 on page 76 of the Agenda Pack – “*Number of Parish Council Emergency Plans completed – 0*” was correct or whether they had just not been recorded. Councillor Tinsley sought reassurance that Parish Councils were taking steps to consider emergency plans, particularly in light of the earlier discussions around flooding. The Head of Neighbourhoods explained that work was ongoing by the Parish Council & Neighbourhoods Liaison Officer to encourage Parish Councils to complete their Emergency Plans. Councillor Tinsley requested that service investigate this and update IPSC on how many had been completed.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Tinsley enquired whether Parish Clerks had access to a casework system, similar to borough Councillors, which would help them to submit issues to the Council. The Head of

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Neighbourhoods confirmed that the Parish Council & Neighbourhoods Liaison Officer facilitated regular meetings with Parish Clerks to discuss cross-cutting issues and to signpost Parish Clerks to the correct services and contacts. It was confirmed that there were no current plans to provide a casework-type system for Parish Clerks.

The Chair questioned whether parish liaison was promoted enough across the Council and commented that often, Parish Clerks would complain that they had raised issues with the relevant services and not heard anything back. Phillip Horsfield, the Service Director of Legal, Elections and Registration Services (Service Director) responded and was of the view that the parish liaison role was taken seriously across the Council and commented that the kind of access that members received to services within the Council could not be replicated for Parish Councillors or Clerks. However, there were systems in place that worked for Parish Clerks, although there was always room for improvements. Parish Clerks should be encouraged to report any issues to the Council via the usual channels and where issues were known, these could also be reported to the Parish Council & Neighbourhoods Liaison Officer.

Councillor Jones expressed some frustration towards the neighbourhood working model, particularly regarding increased restrictions on how monies could be spent and the length of time it took to deliver some projects. Councillor Jones felt that the capital to Community Leadership Fund (CLF) ratio was unbalanced as the CLF could be spent multiple times over with the number of requests received for use of it, whereas capital monies were harder to spend. Councillor Jones also felt that it was difficult to spend CIL monies where desired as they were restricted to use for capital only projects. Councillor Jones commented that projects that were put forward often came from just one councillor rather than coming from an open forum and that, in their view, the model had actually reduced the influence of the public on where ward monies were spent.

In response, the Service Director commented that as with most council budgets, there would always be more demand on funding than monies available. How CIL funding was applied was fixed by legislation. With regard to broadening engagement with the public on the application of funds to projects, the Service Director confirmed that suggestions for improvements in this area would always be welcomed but stressed that the Council continued to be held as an exemplary model in its work in facilitating ward members to be community leaders.

The Head of Neighbourhoods added that the lower spend in capital reported in 2024-25 was largely due to members getting acquainted with their wards and identifying their priorities in their first year of office. Members were encouraged to identify any potential large capital spends early in their term so that this spend could be allocated across the four years.

Councillor Jones further commented that the casework element of an

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elected members' role had increased significantly in recent years, which in their view, was partly down to the fact that the public has difficulty in contacting the correct service at the Council. Councillor Jones welcomed the move to having one council delivery plan per ward, which would help to bring the myriad of services together.

In response, the Service Director mentioned a recent Radio 4 programme that had discussed the fact that the casework load for elected members had increased exponentially in recent years, which confirmed that this was a national issue. The Service Director agreed that members of the public could not be expected to know exactly which part of the Council their queries should be directed to and commented that the Council was looking to make improvements in the area of customer services, to design dashboards and systems where queries could be directed and responded to more quickly.

The Head of Neighbourhoods stressed that the individual ward plans would be used as the driver to pull together the relevant services at the Council to make sure that they were integrated to tackle identified ward priorities. This, in turn, would help residents and community organisations to understand who best to approach on certain issues.

Councillor Allen confirmed their support for Neighbourhood Working but had a number of queries on the report, which they emphasised, were asked from the standpoint as a "critical friend". Initially, Councillor Allen asked why of the 11 performance indicators around community engagement at page 76 of the Agenda Pack, all but 2 of them had a downward trajectory? The Head of Neighbourhoods responded, commenting that these figures were again, likely to be due to the report covering the first year of members' four-year terms and that there would hopefully be an upward trajectory in future years.

Councillor Allen referred to paragraph 2.10 on page 53 of the Agenda Pack, where it was mentioned that ward plans could inform resource allocation. Councillor Allen queried whether the Council would ever get to a stage, with neighbourhood working, where whole budgets could be presented to services on a neighbourhood basis rather than piecemeal?

The Service Director responded and commented that as part of the ongoing work on better collation and analysis of data by the Council, it was possible that in future, the Council could be better able to identify how resources should be targeted and spent in wards. This would be key part of the role of the new Director of Policy, Strategy and Engagement post.

Councillor Allen drew attention to the Risks & Mitigation referred to at page 62 of the Agenda Pack and the commentary within the Risk Register that members themselves were considered a risk to delivery of the Neighbourhood Strategy. Councillor Allen asked that it be noted against this risk that the fact that there had been a number of new elected

members in that reporting year, was a mitigating factor.

In a further question, Councillor Allen asked if it would be possible for the work of the Town Centre Strategic Group (chaired by the Executive Director of Regeneration & Environment) and the Town Centre Operational Group (chaired by the Head of Neighbourhoods) to be brought to IPSC for regular updates. Councillor Allen suggested updates on a quarterly basis, but the Service Director countered this and felt that quarterly updates would provide too much granular, operational detail, and suggested that it would be more appropriate for updates to be brought to IPSC on a six-monthly basis. It was agreed that this would form a recommendation from the meeting.

In a final comment, Councillor Allen noted the amount of technical information and figures provided within the report but felt that more could have been made of the impact of neighbourhood working. Councillor Allen suggested that service should create an accessible, easy to read summary of the impact of Neighbourhood Working on an annual basis, for public distribution. The Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that service would look to produce this, and it was agreed that this would form a recommendation from the meeting.

Councillor Tinsley enquired whether any non-digital updates on neighbourhood working were available for distribution for those people who were not online. The Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that there was a Neighbourhoods Communications Plan, which ensured that hard copies of documents were always available in traditional media formats to those without access to the internet. Each ward had the opportunity to produce bi-annual newsletters which could be distributed to those who required paper copies. Councillor Tinsley asked whether service had the capacity to support the production of these posters and leaflets and the Head of Neighbourhoods commented that this had been flagged as a potential concern. Work had been done on creating a suite of templates to make it easier for Neighbourhood officers to produce these documents.

Councillor Thorp raised a concern about the high costs that had been quoted for certain works within their ward and asked how the Council ensured that prices quoted were accurate and reasonable. The Service Director responded by assuring Councillor Thorp that the Council was internally robust in checking that it obtained value for money for services it contracted. The Service Director encouraged members to escalate any issues relating to the cost of projects, to the relevant Executive Director or Service Director in order that they could investigate on members' behalf.

The Chair enquired about the timescales for the new Strategy, given the delays experienced due to the recruitment of an Interim Director of Policy Strategy and Engagement. The Head of Neighbourhoods confirmed that as this post had been filled, service would be working towards presenting the new Strategy to Cabinet in June and would look to have conversations with members about the content of the new Strategy, prior to this.

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The Chair thanked officers for their input and members for the questions asked.

### **Resolved:-**

1. That the contents of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2024-2025 and presentation be noted;
2. That a regular six-monthly update be provided to IPSC on the work of the Town Centre Strategic Group and the Town Centre Operational Group; and
3. That service work to create an easy to read, accessible summary document for public distribution, providing an annual summary of the Impact of Neighbourhood Working across the borough.

(Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 46 (Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2024-2025) on the grounds that he was the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.)

## **47. IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - WORK PROGRAMME 2025 - 2026**

The Governance Manager introduced the work programme update and drew Members' attention to the following developments:

- **School Road Safety Review**

It was reported that two further meetings had taken place with the Crossing Patrol team and the Parking Enforcement team. Contacts at the SYMCA had been identified and the Governance Advisor would work to arrange a meeting with them. After this, members would consider if any further meetings or information gathering were required, prior to work commencing on pulling out outcomes and potential recommendations.

- **Awaab's Law – Member Development Training**

Members were encouraged to attend the twilight training to be delivered on Thursday 5 February 2026 by the Housing Team, which would provide an update on how service was dealing with the implementation of systems to deal with Phase 1 hazards (damp and mould and emergency repairs) and information on what plans were in place for the increased scope when Phase 2 comes in.

- **Markets/Library Redevelopment Site Visit (joint with OSMB)**

The Governance Advisor confirmed that this visit had been rearranged and was due to take place on the afternoon of 10 February 2026. Members from IPSC, OSMB, the relevant Cabinet Members and officers from Regeneration & Environment would be attending and information on the visit would be fed back to IPSC.

- **Results of IPSC Members Survey**

The Governance Advisor thanked members for their responses to the recent survey that had been circulated regarding the timing of future meetings. The outcome of the survey was that the majority of IPSC members had voted to continue with meetings taking place on a Tuesday afternoon. The results with regard to the timing of a proposed pre-meet were more split and the Governance Advisor confirmed that they would liaise further with the Chair on this.

**Resolved:-**

1. That the current work programme be noted; and
2. That that the Governance Advisor be authorised to make any required changes to the work programme in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair and would report any such changes back at the next meeting for endorsement.

**48. URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Commission's consideration.