

COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday 1 March 2023

Present:- Councillor Tajamal Khan (in the Chair); Councillors Taylor, Alam, Allen, Atkin, Aveyard, Bacon, Baker-Rogers, Ball, Barker, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, Brookes, Browne, Burnett, A Carter, C Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clark, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, Elliott, Ellis, Fisher, Foster, Griffin, Haleem, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Keenan, Lelliott, McNeely, Mills, Miro, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Roche, Sheppard, Tarmey, Thompson, Tinsley, Whomersley, Wilson, Wyatt and Andrews.

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

132. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor had been honoured to meet a diverse range of people from many different backgrounds, including the Sangeet Choir who came to visit the Town Hall and Rabbi Golomb who invited him to visit him at the Sheffield United Synagogue.

133. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Sansome, and Yasseen.

134. COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

135. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 January 2023, be approved.

136. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

137. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED that: the following declarations of interest were received:

Agenda Item	Councillor	Interest Type	Nature of Interest
11	Andrews	Non-Pecuniary	Council tenant.
11	Atkin	Non-Pecuniary	Relative is a Council tenant.
11	Bennett-	Non-Pecuniary	Council tenant.

	Sylvester		
11	Cusworth	Non-Pecuniary	Relative is a Council tenant.
11	Elliott	Non-Pecuniary	Rents grazing land.
11	Keenan	Non-Pecuniary	Spouse or partner rents from South Yorkshire Housing Association.
11	Lelliott	Non-Pecuniary	Right of Way access to rear of property.
11	Wyatt	Non-Pecuniary	Rents a garage.

138. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

(1) **Ms. S. Yousaf** referred to Councillor Alam mentioning during the last scrutiny meeting that £10,000 was allocated for a Qibla stone after discussions with the Council of Mosques and, therefore, asked why had RMBC not communicated with the liaison groups, which included the Rotherham Muslim Burial Council. The Qibla stone served no meaningful purpose and the money would be better spent on toilet facilities for all using the cemetery.

Councillor Alam noted the questioner's view on the stone, but confirmed on 24th October, 2019 a feedback action meeting took place at Herringthorpe Cemetery attended by mosques, mosque committees and burial committees and two issues were raised; one was for an independent group to be established to advise Dignity and the other was for an ornament with a Qibla direction. This was a specific request from the community.

In a supplementary question Ms. Yousaf explained things had changed since 2019 and there were a lot more organisations and groups who were members of the liaison group. She asked had the Cabinet Member not considered discussing this with everyone now in 2023 rather than relying on what happened in 2019 and, furthermore, in terms of the Qibla stone technology had moved on and what was required was a compass to see what direction the Qibla was. On this basis the member of the public totally disagreed with the Cabinet Member about spending £10,000 on a Qibla stone.

Councillor Alam further responded and confirmed that in terms of the liaison group all information had been passed onto Dignity who was now responsible for liaising with the community.

(2) **Mr. F. Tareen** referred to Dignity promising to appoint a Hydrogeologist in October 2022 to investigate the source of the groundwater. RMBC was managing the contract and the current works were being carried out by Dignity. He asked could RMBC confirm whether or not Dignity had instructed a Hydrogeologist and if not, please provide timeframes issued by RMBC to Dignity for this to be carried out.

Councillor Alam explained the question was really one for Dignity as the Council's management of the matter was of the contract and not how Dignity decided to resolve individual issues.

However, he confirmed Dignity have appointed a Hydrologist and a number of inspections have been carried out on site. A monitoring station was also installed as part of the drainage system to enable samples to be taken.

The last two inspections on site were on 12th of January and 6th of February and Dignity have been asked if timescales could be shared with the community and a report of the Hydrologist's results shared publicly when all of the data had been gathered.

In a supplementary question Mr. Tareen explained there were 1,250 community members who signed an objection letter against the planning application submitted by Dignity for the expansion of the Muslim burial area since the prime concern of the community was the water issue and asked if he was right to believe that the report would be published soon by the Hydrologist. If not, could the planning application wait until the report was received.

Councillor Alam confirmed the Chair of Planning was also present today. He confirmed the report would be published and if there were any concerns with the planning application it would be considered by the Board.

(3) Mr. A. Mahmood explained RMBC have to date fined Dignity £395,000 of which £148,000 had been spent so asked what the remaining amount was going to be spent on?

Councillor Alam explained Overall it should be noted that there has been investment of more than £1 million in the Council's cemeteries this year. The Council will keep under review what further capital investment is required and how any further income from Dignity might be used, however the Council will not use public funds to do work that is the responsibility of Dignity.

In a supplementary question Mr. Mahmood asked in light of the planning application being submitted for the extension to the burial ground, which would be filled up very quickly, and in light of so many burial grounds being closed, would it not be prudent for these points to contribute to locating another piece of land close to where Herringthorpe Cemetery was and investing in that.

Councillor Alam confirmed that under the contract the Council needed to provide the land and the developments run by Dignity, but the Council was waiting for a thirty year plan and review from Dignity regarding burial sites in Rotherham.

(4) Mr. A. Azam explained that at the Cabinet meeting on 23rd January, 2023 it was recorded as “Bereavement Services will commission an independent expert on the bereavement facilities available in Rotherham. Plus, “Associated community work” costing £20k.” He, therefore, asked could the Cabinet Member please share what this “Associated Community Work” was and give a breakdown of how much was being spent with whom?

Councillor Alam explained the Council’s Budget report, being voted on later this afternoon, included an amount of £20,000 for Bereavement Services to commission an independent report plus any community engagement and communication if the recommendations were to visit other good practice sites in the country, which may have a cost. It was hoped this amount would cover all the engagement going forward from the recommendations of the independent review.

In a supplementary question Mr. Azam assumed this would be all Council expenditure and no other parties. He referred to the name of Mohamed Omer being aired at a scrutiny meeting in December as an initiative that was being pushed by the Council. This then appeared in the Advertiser as well and this raised numerous questions and anxiety in the Muslim community. It was assumed that before going to press all key tasks would be completed and then this would not be viewed as an equality tick box. To this end apart from saying this year could the Cabinet Member share the exact dates when Mohamed Omer would be undertaking his review, the terms of reference and when would that report be issued.

Councillor Alam considered it to be healthy for an independent person to come and look at the Council’s services and for information Mr. Omer was a leading expert on burials and on advising Ministers and the Cardinals’ Office and actually chaired the National Muslim Burial Council. He also had authority and ran a large award-winning Muslim burial cemetery so for the Council to have him here to look at services and improvements. The month of Ramadan was fast approaching so it was hoped his involvement would commence immediately after Ramadan.

(5) Ms. N. Khan confirmed she attended the last Council meeting in November, 2022 where Councillor Alam promised to meet. She asked, therefore, could she have a definitive date to have a face-to-face meeting as she felt let down by RMBC as promises have been made several times and nothing had been arranged apart from a disappointing email being received which made no sense.

Councillor Alam explained since the start of this governance process he was keen to make sure the Council had ongoing monitoring contract work with Dignity’s engagement. The plan at the moment was for Dignity to meet all stakeholders, the community and friends of cemeteries as there had been some blurring of responsibility in the past because of the delivery of the contract by Dignity. It was for Dignity to meet with community sectors, organisations and others and hopefully when the work

of Mohamed Omer commenced he would be also be able to engage the community too.

In a supplementary question Ms. Khan explained her request was still the same. She did not wish to meet with Dignity or Mr. Omer, but was simply asking for her local Councillors, as a grieving daughter, to meet and sit and listen to her about the problems the community had. The only way the Council would hear what the community had to say was by meeting rather than waiting for Dignity or Mr. Omer.

Councillor Alam was in a similar position with family members being buried in the same place, but pointed out due process must be followed as part of the 35 year contract signed in 2008. The Council were holding Dignity to account with service delivery which could be undermined if the Council started having meetings and conversations about issues, the governance arrangements would decrease and the holding of Dignity to account would be difficult. In terms of stakeholder engagement if Dignity were not undertaking this property then there would be financial penalties so the governance processes must be made clear.

139. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

140. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader opened his statement by welcoming the newly elected member for Keppel Ward, Councillor Carole Foster to the Council.

He also highlighted the following:

- that planning permission had been granted for a new café at Thrybergh Country Park and for the first phase of a regeneration project at Rother Valley Country Park to create a new Village Centre with new waterfront buildings, cycle hub and improved car parking.
- A new battery manufacturing centre was being created by Ultimate Battery Company in Thurcroft which would create 500 jobs. This followed a significant business investment award made towards the end of 2021.
- The new Rothercard scheme was approved, and tens of thousands of local residents will have access to the discounts from April.
- The cost-of-living summit was in development and was expected to take place on 16 March, but more details would follow.
- Referring to the protest outside of the Holiday Inn on 18 February, he noted that the divisive politics of racial hatred were not welcome here. The government should note that it was no good for anyone to have desperate people, seeking sanctuary in this country, trapped in hotels for months on end. The government must move more quickly to ensure the national asylum system was fit for purpose.

- A year had passed since the war in Ukraine had begun and he was very proud that Rotherham had opened its homes and hearts to people from Ukraine and who were doing good work for the Council.

Councillor Foster was welcomed to the Council by a number of the members.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester thanked the Leader, noting that members of the SEND Youth Club at Dalton had been able to choose where to spend the free school meals vouchers. He had found being part of the Rothercard review very rewarding and thanked, Councillors Sheppard, McNeely, Cooksey, and but queried going forward if there was a way of understanding how residents interact with services through using things such as the Rothercard service to monitor access?

The Leader welcomed the progress made with the meal vouchers. He acknowledged the benefits being able to understand how residents interacted with the Council's services. The principle, that people regardless of their incomes and backgrounds are able to enjoy the full range of services, particularly the cultural services that make a difference in people's lives is right and should be part of the work going forward.

Councillor Ball noted that the Council had been successful in attracting funding for Rother Valley Country Park and queried if this would be shared across the rest of the borough. He felt there was no priority given to peripheral towns and villages. The Leader indicated the challenge of how to ensure that all parts of the borough were getting access to investment opportunities was fair. It was why some funding had been moved into neighbourhood budgets, it was why the Council had tried to build multi-agency neighbourhood teams to ensure all members were getting access to those services and were able to respond to the needs of those areas. It was the reason the Towns and Villages fund had been brought forward to get some physical regeneration into towns and villages across the borough, however there was pressures on available budgets across the board.

Councillor A Carter indicated the Liberal Democrat group agreed with the Leaders views regarding the protest on 18 February.

141. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 23 January and 13 February 2023 be received.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Allen

142. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2023-24

Further to Minute No.118 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 February 2023, consideration was given to the report that proposed the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2023/24.

In moving the budget report, the Leader thanked all members who had worked so hard to put together the proposals for this year. He thanked Judith Bader and the Finance team, Chief Executive and Senior Leadership team who commitment and professionalism served our borough so well. He looked back to when the last budget was set, which was three Prime Ministers, three Secretaries of State and five Housing Ministers ago in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

He noted the first Prime Minister declared social care to be fixed through a levy, which the second one cancelled. The second local government minister said there was fat to trim, with the third being forced to bail out councils in trouble. The second Prime Minister delivered what was called a 'true Tory budget' which the third one making us all pay for it. Councils across the country were facing the most challenging financial environment in the history of local government.

He commented that Thurrock issued a Section 114 notice three months ago and were now looking at a 10% council tax rise. Slough a 10% rise and Croydon as much as 15%. If the Council had gone with the council tax proposed by the opposition last year, then it would be imposing the highest council tax increase in the country. Instead, due to the choices made, the Council's was the third lowest increase of any upper tier authority in Yorkshire and was below the government's referendum cap saving the typical household £85 over the period.

He explained that additional funding was available for Adult Social Care to ensure services remained sustainable and for helping providers to increase basic rates of pay for staff who carried out such critical work. Home care services were being prioritised with an above inflation increase in spending, at a time when hospital beds were under incredible pressure.

Last year investments were made in street cleaning with more Street pride staff working on the streets since the start of austerity. This investment meant that 160 more roads had been repaired and the number of potholes had reduced by 60% since 2015.

He said that extra money had been put into youth work, which was taking place regularly now, in Parkgate, Dinnington, Kimberworth, Maltby and Blackburn.

He felt this was a budget the protected the basic services that residents relied on, and this was the choice being made during the meeting.

He explained that investments were being made in the following areas:

- Household Waste Recycling Centres,
- New bin lorries for household waste collections,
- Maintenance equipment for street scene services and green spaces,
- Urban parks and woodlands,
- Rother Valley Country Park, referring to the new café, events space, car parking and cycle hub,
- Centenary way,
- Minor road improvements
- Traffic light improvements,
- Support to South Yorkshire's bus services.

The cost of rising inflation, energy costs and an unfunded national pay settlement hadn't been met by the increases from central funding. As such difficult decisions on cuts and savings needed to be made whilst trying to protect frontline services. If those difficult decisions weren't taken further difficulties would arise.

There was increased demand for support from food banks and Christmas hampers. It was proposed to extend the free school meal holiday voucher scheme for a further twelve months. Further investment would be made to the Council's Energy Crisis grants, the Household Support Fund, the discretionary housing payments, and the Council Tax Support funds.

He noted the Council's Employment Solutions Team had helped more than a thousand local people into work or training. The amount of money the council spent in the local economy had nearly doubled in the last three years. The Towns and Villages Fund had been extended.

In seconding the budget report Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance, passed on his thanks to those who'd worked tirelessly to get to this position. The focus had been around putting the residents of the borough first and through prudently managed finances the Council had been able to propose a number of investments.

He noted that it was clear that the savings presented a challenge to the council including requiring new ways of working however there was a determination of ensure no one was left behind and the most vulnerable did not suffer.

At this point it was moved by Councillor A Carter and seconded by Councillor Tarmey: That the Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 report be accepted as proposed, except for the following amendments to:

1. Appendix 2 Proposed Revenue Investments 2023/24, for a total reduction of the base budget of £89,000 in 2023/24. The total reduction in base budget in subsequent years from 2024/25 onwards of £26,000:

- 1.1. 23/24 R&E1 – Rotherham Markets Redevelopment – Trader Incentives. Remove this £167,000 investment proposal.
 - 1.2. 23/24 R&E2 – Narrow Access Vehicle Resource Requirements. Defer this £63,000 investment proposal to the 2024/25 budget.
 - 1.3. 23/24 FCS2 – Customer & Digital Programme. Reduce this budget proposal from £118,000 to £80,000 per year.
 - 1.4. Add a new permanent revenue investment proposal for 2023/24 – Delegated Tree Maintenance Fund to the value of £59,000. This investment is to be delegated as a specific ward budget (£3,000 for 3-member wards, and £2,000 for 2-member wards) used for the purpose of maintaining existing trees or planting new trees.
 - 1.5. Add a new revenue permanent investment proposal 2023/24 – Universal Youth Work to the value of £70,000. The additional investment is to be used for the purpose of expanding Voluntary & Community Sector commissioning.
 - 1.6. Add a new permanent revenue investment proposal 2023/24 – Staffing Costs of Brinsworth Community Library to the value of £50,000. The additional investment is to be used for the purpose of reimbursing Brinsworth Parish Council of the staffing costs for Brinsworth Community Library.
2. Appendix 3A to 3D Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2025/26:
- 2.1. Change budgets for the following investments, for a total reduction in 2023/24 of £21,835,761 and a total reduction in 2024/25 of £8,937,825:
 - 2.1.1. Capital Investment RVCP Car Parking Payment Stations. Remove this £75,000 investment proposal. This is split by £50,000 reduction to £0 in 2023/24, and £25,000 reduction to £0 in 2024/25.
 - 2.1.2. Capital Investment Traffic Management Act 2004 Part 6 - Moving Traffic Enforcement – Set up costs. Reduce the 2023/24 budget to £120,000 (from £150,000) and reduce the 2024/25 budget to £200,000 (from £250,000). Funding removed for the proposed Wood Lane, Brinsworth bus gate scheme. The other schemes in the proposal are to be continued.
 - 2.1.3. Capital Investment Traffic Signal Improvements. Reduce the 2023/24 budget to £100,000 (from £200,000). Reduce the 2024/25 budget investment to £200,000 (from £400,000).
 - 2.1.4. Capital Investment Bus Route Improvements. Reduce the 2023/24 budget to £50,000 (from £100,000). No change to the 2024/25 budget investment of £231,000.
 - 2.1.5. Capital Investment Markets Redevelopment. Remove this investment proposal, with a reduction of £21,345,761 for 2023/24 and £8,902,825 for 2024/25.

- 2.1.6. Capital Investment Bereavement Services Investment. Reduce the 2023/24 budget to £128,000 (from £148,000). Funding removed from the Independent Report – Mohammed Omer (£20,000).
 - 2.1.7. Capital Investment Narrow Access Vehicle Resource Requirements. Reduce the 2023/24 budget to £0. Defer this £240,000 investment proposal to the 2024/25 budget.
- 2.2. Add or increase budgets for the following investments, for a total increase of £4,498,960 in 2023/24 and a reduction in 2025/26 of £1,700,000 that is re-profiled for delivery in 2023/24.
- 2.2.1. Capital Investment Boroughwide Tree Planting & Maintenance Programme. Increase the 2023/24 budget to £59,000 (from £0). This investment is to be delegated as a specific ward budget (£3,000 for 3-member wards, and £2,000 for 2-member wards) used for the purpose of maintaining existing trees or planting new trees.
 - 2.2.2. Capital Investment Ward Budgets. Increase 2023/24 budget from £7120 to £100,000 for each of the two member wards, at an additional total cost of £1,486,080.
 - 2.2.3. Capital Investment Ward Budgets. Increase 2023/24 budget from £10,680 to £150,000 for each of the three member wards, at an additional total cost of £1,253,880.
 - 2.2.4. Capital Investment – Building Decarbonisation. Accelerate the planned programme by bringing forward to 2023/24 £1.7m of investment currently allocated in 2025/26 (reducing the 2025/26 spend to £0). This will result in a total investment in 2023/24 of £4,371,811 in this scheme.
3. Excluding the removal of the Markets Redevelopment project, the financing impact of the remaining reductions and proposed investments is a £0.3m increase in the annual borrowing costs for the Council from 2024/25 onwards. There are currently £918,000 of sunk costs associated with the proposed removal of the Markets Redevelopment scheme (2.1.5 above). These costs would be charged to revenue and funded from the Budget and Financial Strategy Reserve. The revenue saving of £0.7m per year from 2024/25 as a result of the reduced financing costs of this scheme will be used to cover the additional £0.3m per year financing costs associated with the investment proposals at 2.2 above. The remaining £0.4m per year will be used to replenish the Budget and Financial Strategy Reserve and ultimately support the Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

In moving the amendment Councillor, A Carter stated that this had been put forward in the context of years of overspending on budgets. He acknowledged there had been unexpected pressures however it was part

of the problem. Big changes were needed with a view to keeping the Council Tax as low as possible. The decision making should be brought closer to the residents enabling them to have a say what happens in their local area. He felt the Council was far too reactionary in tackling anti-social behaviour. It was felt that increased funding for youth work would enable partners to work with the Council as needed rather than when things were out of control.

It was felt that adding pay stations to a country park that people had to drive to was wrong. He agreed with the premises of improving bus routes however this should be the responsibility of South Yorkshire's Mayor.

In seconding, the amendment Councillor Tarmey indicated he felt the proposed budget meant borrowing to achieve what residents wanted. There was a need to accept that online shopping had replaced the need for some of the shops and markets in the town centre. Residents had indicated they did not travel to the town centre but wanted to see investment in their local towns and villages.

He believed there was a demand for a cleaner and greener borough with residents unhappy with the state of trees in the more rural parts of the borough. Regarding bereavement services, residents were being told what was needed for cemeteries, however it was felt that more attention should be paid to the views of residents and implementing the proposals already agreed.

In response to the proposed amendment Councillor Lelliott explained the budget proposed investments in children, schools, services, and economic development. The proposals for investment in the town centre had drawn in investments. Lots of consultation had been carried out on the town centre proposals. Local businesses depended upon the investment being made.

Councillor Roche noted that Brinsworth Parish Council were increasing their precept but with the proposed amendment also seeking additional funding for Brinsworth. He clarified that all members were able to submit a number of proposals for road schemes each year.

Councillor Wyatt indicated he was against the amendment. He noted that nationally markets were experiencing hard times but there was a need to look at the sustainability of the trader base. Traders needed to be supported through the period of change and the current building needed renovation. Markets were a historic tradition and if support wasn't provided a significant investment would need to be passed back.

The Leader explained that all parts of the borough were treated equally. He understood the principle of the proposed amendment around transferring funding from central decisions into decisions made within the wards however it contained two problems. The first was the expectation that all members would underspend by £66,000 in terms of capital

expenditure for this financial year in each ward. The second was to say that the benefits of making changes to improve the bus services and improve road layouts would be felt by all residents. If it was down to the individual wards to help, these things would not benefit everyone in the borough. Returning the funding from the bid for the market and central library development could lead to those proposals not being fulfilled.

Councillor Allen indicated that residents would be appalled if the funding for the markets and central library development was returned to the Government.

Councillor Cusworth indicated the proposed amendment did not indicate what their proposals for the town centre were. Rotherham had been a market town for a long time, and it brought a diversity of people and goods to the town, whilst creating access to goods at a reasonable rate during the cost of living crisis.

Councillor Ball indicated that the redevelopment of the markets had been a long-established plan therefore now was not the time to change plans where significant investment had been made. He was unable to support a uniformed approach to funding.

Councillor Sheppard explained the number of visitors to Rother Valley County Park was increasing therefore there was a need for the car parks to be ready to accommodate the additional visitors.

Councillor Z Collingham noted that the amendment cled for more trees and more revenue investment for Brinsworth Parish Council but did not mention anything about council tax.

Councillor Reynold believed that the town was not thriving however no towns were. There was a need to move with the time, the style of markets had changed. The town centre needed to be rebuilt.

Councillor Wilson said she had used the market in the town centre for years and it had been her saviour. She still used it now because she wanted to support local businesses. She accepted that it was not where it should be however businesses were working hard in the town and the markets itself to address this. She believed that markets elsewhere were thriving due to regeneration.

Councillor Beck believed that the Council involved everyone in decisions. All Members were asked what roads they would like improved in consultation with residents. There were many different examples of how the Council sought direct involvement from its members.

Councillor Atkin said the markets were there for people who needed things and the traders would suffer whilst the work was undertaken so needed support.

Councillor Miro explained he was not against the investment in the town centre however it had found little to make him want to visit it. He felt he would be able to accomplish more within his ward if more funding was available for ward budgets.

In response to the points raised in the debate on the amendment, Councillor A Carter indicated that many of the big businesses had left the town centre. He believed that markets were a failing industry and only a minority of residents used the town centre. There was a need to move with the times. He was pleased that visitor numbers were increasing in Rother Valley Country Park but queried if that was the right thing to prioritise.

On being put the vote the amendment was lost.

At this point it was proposed by Councillor Ball and seconded by Councillor Mills:

Budget and Council Tax for the 2023/24 Financial Year

That the Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 report be accepted as proposed, with the exception of the following amendments:

1. Reduce the proposed Council Tax increase from 4% to 2%, with the proposed 2% increase being made up of a 2% increase through the Adult Social Care precept (ringfenced for adult social care).

The reduction in the proposed level of Council Tax increase from 4% to 2% will create a budget shortfall of £2.4m for 2023/24, £2.5m for 2024/25 and £2.6m for 2025/26. For 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26 this will be funded by £7.5m from the Budget and Financial Strategy Reserve.

2. Remove the Local Council Tax Support Top Up Scheme from the Budget proposals for 2023/24 and 2024/25. In 2023/24 this will reduce the call on the Household Support Fund by £1.2m and it is proposed that this funding is now used to provide grants to households to enable the acquisition and installation of solar panels on their properties to reduce the impact of energy bills.

The grant scheme for solar panels will be accessed via an application process, with a potential grant award of up to £3,000 towards the acquisition and installation of solar panels. It is anticipated that around 400 households can be supported through this fund. Applicants applying must demonstrate that they are suffering financial difficulty due to the impact of rising energy costs or be referred into the scheme through the Council's debt advice provision through the Advocacy and Appeals service.

For 2024/25 the removal of the Local Council Tax Support Top Up Scheme will reduce the Council's proposed call on reserves by £1.9m (£1.2m Local Council Tax Support Grant reserve and £0.7m Collection Fund Income Guarantee Grant Reserve).

3. Increase the budget in 2023/24 by £0.5m for street cleaning and by £0.7m for road repairs and maintenance. These additional areas of expenditure total £1.2m for 2023/24 and will be funded by the £1.2m Local Council Tax Support Grant Reserve that was planned for use in 2024/25 leaving the £0.7m Collection Fund Income in reserve for future use.
4. Allocate £460k of the £8.799m Fleet Replacement Programme within the capital programme 2023/24 specifically for the purchase of 20 small electric vehicles to accelerate and support the climate emergency motion that Council passed.

In moving the amendment Councillor Ball thanked the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services and her team. He felt this amendment was fairer for all and provided further funding for those services such as litter and potholes. There was a need to be fair to everyone in the borough who was going through difficult times. The amendment provided solar energy for homes and increased the number of electric vehicles. It also opened up opportunities for apprenticeships.

In seconding, the amendment Councillor Mills noted the need to support and remove financial pressures for residents.

Councillor Wilson queried who the amendment was support by not increasing council tax. The spirit in which the solar energy proposal was presented was understood however it was queried how some residents, who could need the scheme, would be able to afford or qualify for the grants.

Councillor Pitchley felt that by removing the local council tax support scheme, not all residents would be able to afford the proposal. More facts were needed for it to be fully considered.

Councillor Sheppard queried why the proposal was being offered to those who had the least to be able to fund it for the benefit of others.

Councillor Tarmey felt the amendment was not fiscally responsible, that it put more pressure on debt and raided the reserves. Renewable energy was support but removing funding from a vital council tax support fund, which supported lots of people, could not be supported. The planning system should be looked at to mandate developers to install solar panels.

Councillor Hoddinott said she was proud that Rotherham had a good scheme that supported people of working age and it was vital that support was provided to them and other residents who needed it most.

Councillor Beck could not support the amendment due to the removal of the local council tax support scheme. The amendment would make poor people poorer. The amendment was not fair for all.

Councillor Baker-Rogers would not support the amendment. The proposal regarding solar panels could put residents in debt and stop others from moving home for 10 years.

Councillor A Carter opposed the amendment indicating a better proposal would be to install solar panels on homes the Council already owned. The reserves should not be used to freeze council tax.

Councillor Roche felt the amendment was unfair and took away subsidies from those who needed them. Reducing council tax would not help the poorer families and would build up future problems.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester said there was a need to find other ways to fund their proposals as people in his ward had gone without food and heat for days and there was an increase in the number of people who sleep rough.

The Leader believed this would create a £2.5m deficit each year. If the aim was to provide a lower council tax rise the proposals should indicate how this would be met.

Councillor Z Collingham said the amendment proposed a smaller council tax rise. The national situation was unprecedented, and this was one mechanism the council had that had the ability to affect everyone's lives. Every household did matter. The amendment was financially sound and putting funding into road repair and road cleaning mattered to people.

Councillor Lelliott felt the amendment was taking support away from those who needed it most.

In response to the points raised in the debate on the amendment, Councillor Ball asked that all Councillors who had supported the proposed council tax increase should be prepared to go back to their residents to explain why they are being asked to contribute more when they're struggling to get by. The national government had supported the most vulnerable households in recent years through cost-of-living payments, benefit uplifts and energy support. Funding was also provided to the Council via the Household Support Fund to further help those in need the most. People in the borough needed to feel that they could contribute, that they could hold the Council to account for the services it provided. Many of those households were already in receipt of significant council tax support. There was a need to remain fair and mindful of the many households who were not eligible for council tax support. The approach in the borough had brought long term hardship with too much short termism and a lack of strategic vision. Continued parking charges had led to the

collapse of the town centre. The PFI contract costing nearly £5 million per year, with an on average 31% occupancy rate was sighted as a failure. The amendment showed that the people of Rotherham believed in fairness and should be included in the budget.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

The meeting now discussed the original substantive motion that had been moved by the Leader and seconded by Councillor Alam.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester indicated he felt the scrutiny process of the budget had gone backward and asked that consideration be given to holding full member seminars with the relevant directors to consider the budget proposals. He noted that most of the pressures on the budget were external and queried if there were any inefficiencies. He asked how inefficiencies were addressed. There was an immediate need to address those inefficiencies across the borough and provide support now.

Councillor Roche welcomed the proposals, indicating there was a clear need for the additional funding in Adult Social Care. The number of people requiring care was growing year on year along with the existing pressures of staff retention. The Government asked local councils how much was needed to support adult social care and a £7 billion shortage was identified across the country.

Councillor Sheppard noted that through investment the borough would see continual improvement on a proactive and reactive basis, for example the investment would continue to ensure historic landmarks such as Waterloo Kiln were restored.

Councillor Beck explained that investment was being made in the Household Waste Recycling Centres across the borough. This was part of a wider project to bring services in house including ensuring those staff working on the sites were directly employed by the Council. Equipment was being modernised including purchasing two narrow access bin lorries to create improved accessibility within the more rural areas.

Councillor Cusworth supported the budget noting the increase demand on children's services. The cost-of-living crisis was putting pressures on families with there being a national increase in instances of domestic and substance abuse. More children were being admitted to the care system however through creative ways of managing budgets a cohort of children in care were brought back into the borough. The Council was able to intervene in situations earlier through investment into family conferencing. The free school meal vouchers had been a lifesaver for many, and that support was needed now.

Councillor Allen noted that one of the priorities in the Council was ensuring every neighbourhood was a great place to live and there was a need to continue to improve neighbourhoods. The Council was not

proposing to implement the maximum 5% council tax increase. She offered praise and thanks to both the corporate and directorate finance team. She also thanked her Cabinet colleagues, in particular Councillor Allam for the intensive work undertaken to create the proposals.

Councillor Lelliott said the Council was supporting the most vulnerable whilst also freezing car parking fees, continuing with free parking and freezing taxi licencing costs. Investment was being made in the outlying towns across the borough through the Towns and Villages fund.

Councillor Wilson indicated she felt the budget covered aspects such as building for the future and creating opportunities through investment proposals.

Councillor Tarmey expressed his concerns around the lack of cost control and felt the budget could be overspent.

Councillor Baum-Dixon opposed the budget. He felt the budget had been written by officers, for officers, with no drive to do things differently and believed the taxpayer of Rotherham would pay for it. The Council needed to have the courage to look for savings all of the time rather than when it was in a crisis. He explained that he had not supported the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner percept rise. He felt the Council needed the ambition to innovate and try something different.

In response to the issues raised in the debate the Leader acknowledged that the engagement from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the budget proposals had been less than in previous years. This was due to additional funding being provided by Government late in the budget setting process. In response to the points made on interim savings, the Council was able to defer some spending for some time, on vacancies for instance, however when those savings were made permanent, that could then have an effect on service delivery. The Leader concluded his remarks in commending the proposed budget to members.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, and the Council's Constitution, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

For: Councillors Alam, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Aveyard, Baker-Rodgers, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Bird, Brookes, Browne, Clark, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, Elliott, Ellis, Foster, Griffin, Haleem, Havard, Hoddinott, Hughes, Jones, Keenan, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Roche, Sheppard, Taylor, Wilson, and Wyatt.

Against: Councillors Bacon, Ball, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Burnett, A. Carter, C. Carter, Castledine-Dack, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Fisher, Hunter, Miro, Reynolds, Tarmey, Thompson, and Tinsley.

Abstentions: None

Resolved:

That Council

1. Approves the Budget and Financial Strategy for 2023/24 as set out in the report and appendices, including a basic Council Tax increase of 2% and an Adult Social Care precept of 2%.
2. Approves the proposed extension to the Local Council Tax Support Top Up scheme, that will provide up to £117.60 of additional support to low-income households most vulnerable to rising household costs, through reduced Council Tax bills as described in section 2.5.11-14.
3. Approves the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26, as described within section 2.6.
4. Approves the Reserves Strategy as set out in Section 2.9 noting that the final determination of Reserves will be approved as part of reporting the financial outturn for 2022/23.
5. Notes and accepts the comments and advice of the Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services (Section 151 Officer), provided in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as to the robustness of the estimates included in the Budget and the adequacy of reserves for which the Budget provides (Section 2.14).
6. Notes the feedback from the public and partners following the public consultation on the Council's budget for 2023/24 which took place from 19 December 2022 to 22 January 2023, attached as Appendix 10.
7. Approves the proposed increases in Adult Social Care provider contracts and for Personal Assistants as set out in Section 2.4.
8. Approves the revenue investment proposals set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 2.
9. Approves the Council Fees and Charges for 2023/24 attached as Appendix 7.
10. Approves the revenue savings proposals set out in Section 2.8 and Appendix 4.
11. Approves the application of the Business Rates Reliefs as set out in Section 2.10, in line with Government guidance.
12. Approves the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme as presented in Section 2.12 and Appendices 3A to 3F.

13. Approves the Treasury Management matters for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 9 of this report including the Prudential Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy.
14. Approves the Flexible use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2023/24 (Appendix 5).
15. Approves that the projected 2022/23 revenue outturn overspend will be funded from the Council's corporate reserves as indicated within section 2.9.
16. Approves that any variation in the assumed Public Health Grant will be reflected in the Budget once notified.
17. Approves the recommendation to continue with the principles and measures adopted since April 2020 to make faster payments to suppliers on receipt of goods, works and services following a fully reconciled invoice as described in section 2.11.
18. Approves that the Capital Programme Budget continues to be managed in line with the following key principles:
 - i. Any underspends on the existing approved Capital Programme in respect of 2022/23 be rolled forward into future years, subject to an individual review of each carry forward to be set out within the Financial Outturn 2022/23 report to Cabinet.
 - ii. In line with Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules 7.7 to 7.11 and 8.12, any successful grant applications in respect of capital projects will be added to the Council's approved Capital Programme on an ongoing basis.
 - iii. Capitalisation opportunities and capital receipts flexibilities will be maximised, with capital receipts earmarked to minimise revenue costs.
19. Approves the Statutory Resolution of Council Tax for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 6, incorporating precept figures as advised by South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the Town and Parish Councils within the Borough.

143. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES 2023-24

Further to Minute No. 122 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 February 2023, consideration was given to the report which was seeking approval for the proposed values of the housing rents, non-dwelling rents, District Heating and service charges and the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2023/24.

The report was also considered alongside the HRA Business Plan report for 2023/24.

The council was required to produce an annual business plan that covered a 30-year period. The plan was refreshed annually. The key priorities that influenced the plan remained largely as they were previously. These were:

- Investing in future housing growth.
- Replacing homes lost through Right to Buy.
- Maintaining Decent Home standards and service standards.
- Ensuring compliance to statutory functions, part of which was achieving energy performance C across the housing stock.
- Sustaining the current levels of investment in front line services.
- Safeguarding and supporting the most vulnerable tenants.

A critical consideration of the plan was to set the rents at a level to enable the Council to meet those priorities and ensure long term viability over the plan.

A significant change that the plan responded to this year was the national introduction of the social rent cap had set rents at a maximum of 7%. The report was very clear on what could and could not be achieved. The proposed way forward meant there would be no cuts to existing housing stock, there would be no reduction to current build standards, there would be continued delivery of new homes to replace those lost through right to buy.

The proposal within the report was that dwelling rents were increased by 7% which included shared ownership. A 6% increase to service charges, which included garages and parking. District heating costs were proposed to in-line with national Government's proposed dual fuel cap.

It was recommended to support the proposals presented at the meeting.

In seconding the reports Councillor Allen explained the Council was legally required to review rents and make such changes as required. The circumstances everyone found themselves in were significant, challenges from increasing gas and electricity costs and high inflation. The Authority had a duty to balance the financial considerations as affected by those considerations and then impact on tenants. Under the proposal of a 7% increase, the average weekly rent would increase by £5.54 per week.

The Council had 19,807 properties and 16,227 of those households, who were in receipt of benefits would not be directly affected by those rent increases. Similarly on the district heating charges, there was an increase, but the increase would remain within parameters that all other tenants were experiencing. She explained that there were some drop-in sessions planned for residents to talk about what support was available around the district heating charges.

She explained that other options had been considered. A 5% increase had been considered. The difference between a 5% and a 7% increase was significant. If the Council levied a 5% increase it would not raise enough income to cover inflationary costs, it would mean that the Council would be able to deliver far less in terms of affordable housing and it would be delivered to a lower specification. A 7% increase gave the Council the ability to deliver a further 140 houses, bringing the total to around 700 in the years up to 2029. It also allowed continued investment in housing growth and allowed achievement of the energy rating across the borough and to maintain the work carried out on decent home standards. It also allowed the Council to sustain current levels of investment in frontline services.

The business plan was about promoting growth rather than managing decline and it was for that reason she was seconding the proposals of the two reports.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained he would not be voting on the proposals as he was a council tenant. His questions related to charges to tenants in bungalow complexes linked towards neighbourhood centres. Considering the changes to fees for those, for example fees of £10.60 per hour for a commercial body to book those centres. He queried if that was a commercial rate in terms of what people were paying into those. Was that enough to cover the costs and ensure that people did not have to pay on top of the rents to take part in activities. He asked if a specific review could be carried out into the overall package that people pay for these centres to ensure it met the requirements and was efficient.

Councillor Tinsley expressed concern with the unit rises for district heating and he queried if last years tapered increase was short sighted. He was pleased to know that community engagement sessions had been arranged to inform and highlight the areas of support that residents could receive.

Councillor Reynolds expressed a need for a review of this because a number of residents lived in sheltered accommodation with many rules and regulations imposed on the rooms, visitors, and priority around booking rooms. He felt this needed to be brought up to date to follow proper procedures.

In response to the discussions Councillor Brookes acknowledged that she would provide information on the collection of the extra fees, and this response would also include intelligence around the best commercial price. In conclusion she noted that the key thing regarding district heating was that there would be parity across all the tenants.

Resolved: That Council approved:

1. That dwelling rents are increased by 7% in 2023/24 (Option 1) in line with the latest Government policy on rents for social housing

which caps rent increases to 7% for 2023/24.

2. That shared ownership rents are increased by 7% in 2023/24 (Option 1) as per the increase on Council dwelling rents.
3. That there is a 6% increase in charges for garages and parking spaces, communal facilities, cooking gas and use of laundry facilities.
4. That the Council retain the Energy Bill Relief Scheme amounts to offset some of the deficit incurred in cushioning tenants from energy price rises.
5. The unit charge per Kwh is increased by 186.43% and weekly prepayment charges are increased by 44% to 150%, depending on property size, for District Heating Schemes in 2023/24 (Option 1) to enable the Scheme to break even in the long term.
6. Approve £2.593m 'cushioning' effect that the Council has put in place through the District Housing Scheme for 2023/2024 (which was £1.65m in 2022/2023).
7. Approve the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2023/24 as shown in Appendix 2.
8. That the Council retain the policy of realigning rents on properties at below formula rent, to the formula rent level when the property is re-let.

Moved by: Councillor Brookes

Seconded by: Councillor Allen

144. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2023-24

Further to Minute No. 123 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 February 2023, consideration was given to the report which explained that the Council was required to produce a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan setting out its investment priorities over a 30-year period. The report also provided a detailed technical overview of the current position and the reason for changes to the Business Plan.

The report was also considered alongside the Housing Revenue Account Rents and Service Charges 2023/24.

The council was required to produce an annual business plan that covered a 30-year period. The plan was refreshed annually. The key priorities that influenced the plan remained largely as they were previously. These were:

- Investing in future housing growth.
- Replacing homes lost through Right to Buy.
- Maintaining Decent Home standards and service standards.
- Ensuring compliance to statutory functions, part of which was achieving energy performance C across the housing stock.
- Sustaining the current levels of investment in front line services.
- Safeguarding and supporting the most vulnerable tenants.

A critical consideration of the plan was to set the rents at a level to enable the Council to meet those priorities and ensure long term viability over the plan.

A significant change that the plan responded to this year was the national introduction of the social rent cap had set rents at a maximum of 7%. The report was very clear on what could and could not be achieved. The proposed way forward meant there would be no cuts to existing housing stock, there would be no reduction to current build standards, there would be continued delivery of new homes to replace those lost through right to buy.

The proposal within the report was that dwelling rents were increased by 7% which included shared ownership. A 6% increase to service charges, which included garages and parking. District heating costs were proposed to in-line with national Government's proposed dual fuel cap.

It was recommended to support the proposals presented at the meeting.

In seconding, the reports Councillor Allen explained the Council was legally required to review rents and make such changes as required. The circumstances everyone found themselves in were significant, challenges from increasing gas and electricity costs and high inflation. The Authority had a duty to balance the financial considerations as affected by those considerations and then impact on tenants. Under the proposal of a 7% increase, the average weekly rent would increase by £5.54 per week.

The Council had 19,807 properties and 16,227 of those households, who were in receipt of benefits would not be directly affected by those rent increases. Similarly on the district heating charges, there was an increase, but the increase would remain within parameters that all other tenants were experiencing. She explained that there were some drop-in sessions planned for residents to talk about what support was available around the district heating charges.

She explained that other options had been considered. A 5% increase had been considered. The difference between a 5% and a 7% increase was significant. If the Council levied a 5% increase it would not raise enough income to cover inflationary costs, it would mean that the Council would be able to deliver far less in terms of affordable housing and it would be delivered to a lower specification. A 7% increase gave the Council the ability to deliver a further 140 houses, bringing the total to

around 700 in the years up to 2029. It also allowed continued investment in housing growth and allowed achievement of the energy rating across the borough and to maintain the work carried out on decent home standards. It also allowed the Council to sustain current levels of investment in frontline services.

The business plan was about promoting growth rather than managing decline and it was for that reason she was seconding the proposals of the two reports.

Resolved: That Council:

1. Approved the proposed 2023-24 Base Case Option 1 for the HRA Business Plan.
2. Reviewed the Plan annually to provide an updated financial position.

Moved by: Councillor Brookes

Seconded by: Councillor Allen

145. MEMBERSHIP OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON THE COUNCIL, POLITICAL BALANCE AND ENTITLEMENT TO SEATS

Consideration was given to the report which detailed how under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Local Authorities had the duty to allocate seats to political groups and set out the principles to be followed when determining such allocation, following formal notification of the establishment of political groups in operation on the Council.

There was a requirement to annually review the entitlement of the political groups to seats on the committees of the Council.

The allocation of seats must follow two principles:

- (a) Balance must be achieved across the total number of available seats on committees; and
- (b) Balance must be achieved on each individual committee or body where seats are available

There were presently 4 political groups in operation on the Council – the Labour Group (majority), Conservative Group (opposition), Liberal Democrat (Lib Dem) Group and Rotherham Democratic Party (RDP) Group – with 2 non-aligned councillors (members who are not in a political group).

The Political Balance of the Council had changed due to a by-election in Keppel Ward which took place on 26 January 2023.

There were 149 seats available on committees, boards and panels and under the calculation the Labour Group is entitled to 86 seats, the opposition Group (Conservative) 43 seats, the Liberal Democrat Group 10

seats, the Rotherham Democratic Party Group 5 seats. The seats allocated to the non-aligned councillors is 5.

Resolved: That Council agreed:

1. To note the new political balance of the Council as a result of the by-election.
2. That the entitlement of the membership of the political groups be agreed and such entitlements be reflected in Council's appointments of members to committees.
3. To agree the amendment of appointments of members to Committees, Boards and Panels to reflect the change in political balance as notified by Group Leaders and as detailed below:

NOMINATIONS TO COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PANELS: as agreed:

Audit Committee

Councillor Sheila Cowen – to be removed

Councillor Tony Browne - to be added as a member and as vice chair

Councillor Charlie Wooding – to be removed

Councillor Simon Ball – to be added

Health Select Commission

Councillor Carole Foster – to be added

Councillor Charlie Wooding – to be removed

Improving Lives Select Commission

Councillor Ian Jones – to be removed

Councillor Joanna Baker-Rogers – to be added

Licensing Board

Councillor Ian Jones – to be removed

Councillor Carole Foster – to be added

Licensing Committee

Councillor Ian Jones – to be removed

Councillor Carole Foster – to be added

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Councillor Tom Collingham – to be removed as vice-chair

Councillor Joshua Bacon – to be added as vice-chair

Councillor Sheila Cowen – to be removed

Councillor Tony Browne - to be added as vice-chair of Audit

Planning Board

Councillor Charlie Wooding – to be removed

Councillor Simon Ball – to be added

Mayoral Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Tom Collingham – to be removed

Councillor Joshua Bacon – to be added

Substitute Member

Councillor Lee Hunter – to be added

Moved by: Councillor Allen

Seconded by: Councillor Read

146. CALENDAR OF COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THE 2023-24 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Consideration was given to a report, submitted in accordance with the rules of procedure as detailed in the Council's Constitution, that set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

Resolved: - That Council approves the calendar of meetings for the 2023-24 municipal year.

Mover: - Councillor Allen

Secunder: - Councillor Read

147. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover:- Councillor Baker-Rodgers

Secunder:- Councillor Cowen

148. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Roche

Secunder: Councillor Cusworth

149. LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Board Sub-Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Ellis

Secunder: Councillor Hughes

150. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Planning Board be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Atkin

Secunder: Councillor Bird

151. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee on 13 February 2023 including approving the Pay Policy Statement 2023-24 for publication under Chapter 8 of the Localism Act 2011 be adopted.

Mover: Councillor Alam

Seconder: Councillor Allen

152. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved: That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee be adopted.

Mover: Councillor McNeely

Seconder: Councillor Griffin

153. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

Councillor Burnett asked with the Police Precept increasing, could both Police Representatives inform the Council how they voted and the reasons for doing so?

Councillor Haleem thanked Councillor Burnett for his question.

At the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on Friday, 3rd February, 2023, seven of the eight Members present voted to support the policing element of the Council Tax precept for 2023/24.

Councillor Baum-Dixon was the only member present to vote against the proposal.

Councillor Haleem confirmed she voted in favour because more Police were needed on the streets. The Commissioner's proposal would mean seventy-five more Police in Rotherham in the coming year giving:-

- Thirteen more Police in Neighbourhoods Teams.
- Four more response officers.
- Thirteen more in investigations, including the Vulnerable Persons' Unit.
- Plus another forty-five student officers.

It also meant the whole of South Yorkshire, including communities, would benefit from one hundred and eighty-eight new force-wide posts which meant more to tackle off road bikes, more dog handlers, more mounted police, more firearms officers and more to tackle online sexual offences – something Conservative members would have been expected to support.

Residents indicated in the consultation what they want to see. The Conservative Government promised them to the country. Seeing Conservative Councillors undermine their own Government's commitment

to more Police for the second year running, and in doing so making communities less safe, was deeply disappointing.

In a supplementary question Councillor Burnett explained that a large portion of the South Yorkshire Police precept missed a couple of claims from the Hillsborough disaster and child sexual exploitation failures in Rotherham. With this in mind how comfortable was the Spokesperson on the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel with Rotherham residents paying the price and the Council Tax for South Yorkshire Police's failures. Surely this was not fair.

Councillor Haleem confirmed she was comfortable with the Finance Team and the Police as they had more knowledge, the skillset and experience for the decisions they have made.

As a Point of Order Councillor Baum-Dixon wished to place on record that the original question asked for both South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel Representatives to inform the Council how they voted and the reasons for doing so. Councillor Haleem had been able to put across why she had voted in the way she did and indicated how Councillor Baum-Dixon had voted, but Councillor Baum Dixon wished to advise the Members present and the residents of Rotherham on the reasons why he voted the way he did.

The Mayor advised the Point of Order had been noted and that the question had been answered by the Designated Spokesperson for the Police and Crime Panel, who was also the Chair.

In a further Point of Order Councillor Bennett-Sylvester disagreed with the Mayor and confirmed the question had actually been to both Representatives. In the answer Councillor Baum-Dixon was specifically mentioned and under Standing Orders Councillor Baum-Dixon should have the right to reply when so mentioned.

With competing ideas it was only fair that all Members should hear when both Members were elected as Rotherham's Representatives of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.

To provide some clarity the Monitoring Officer confirmed he would follow this up in writing after the meeting on what the Mayor had ruled on, what advice he had been provided to the Mayor and that this was not a matter for debate.

154. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

(1) Councillor Hoddinott asked what were the range of parish council tax rises - highest and lowest - for the forthcoming year?

Councillor Alam confirmed the highest percentage increases were for

Wales Parish at 39.65% and Brinsworth at 23%. In cash terms, the biggest increase (£38.95 for a Band D property) would be in the Brinsworth parish. The lowest was actually a reduction and was Loughton-en-le-Morthen at -6.18%.

A full list of changes to parish precepts would be supplied in writing.

In a supplementary question Councillor Hoddinott welcomed the information in writing and was amazed at the range. She, therefore, asked, given the discussion that had taken place earlier on the agenda and the squeeze on households, if the Cabinet Member believed Parish Councils should also take responsibility to ensure they did not pass on large rises to residents.

Councillor Alam agreed with Councillor Hoddinott and confirmed Parish Councils did need to take some responsibility to ensure people were not penalised more. This information would be fed back to Parish Councils.

(2) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked what had been the total cost so far to the HRA of providing hard standings, screening and any other capital works for communal bins linked to the pink bin changes of 2019?

Councillor Brookes explained the total costs charged to the Housing Revenue Account for works to provide hard standings, screening and associated ground works to accommodate communal bin provision to Council homes was £2,641,669.

The works have improved the waste facilities across 273 apartment blocks covering 1821 individual properties equating to a cost of £1,450 per property.

(3) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked how many incidents have there been this last financial year of the caretaking service clearing fly tips and excess rubbish from around communal bin areas and have these incurred any extra costs to housing?

Councillor Brookes confirmed to date, this financial year, the estate caretaking service has attended to ten incidences where excess waste or tipped items had to be removed from communal bin areas. The associated extra cost to the service was £16,411.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester referred to his own experiences of having to contact relevant staff due to inconsiderate waste being discarded and believed these communal areas were being targeted and a magnet for fly tipping and non-residents' cross-contaminating bins etc.

The pink bin changes were brought in during 2019 on the back of the change to kerbside plastic so asked was it time for a review of the operation, the caretaking staff looking after them and best results from the

service. In addition, not making residents having to look at eyesores as a result of non-residents coming and using and abusing the service.

Councillor Brookes was unable to accurately say when that contract was up for renewal, but would investigate and come back to Councillor Bennett-Sylvester.

(4) Councillor Jones in November asked the Cabinet Member why RMBC had not ever registered Phase 1 of Watsons Tip as contaminated. In his reply he said it was not the Council's responsibility and that the Environment Agency should be contacted so asked was this still the Cabinet Member's opinion?

Councillor Beck confirmed it was.

In a supplementary Councillor Jones confirmed that in an effort to be open minded to other people's opinions, he had contacted both an Environmental Solicitor and the Environment Agency's Specialist Landfill Team Manager and both were of the opinion that it was the Local Authority's responsibility to list the site on the Contaminated Land Register. The only two organisations that could do this were the Environment Agency and the Council, so unless the Cabinet Member could suggest anyone else to contact, when would the Council carry out its duty of care to the residents and, over thirty years later than it should have, register the land.

Councillor Beck explained the Council was prevented from listing the land as a result of the legislation. It clearly set out in the statutory guidance that the listing of land as contaminated should be a last resort and the legislation specifically exempted the listing of land in certain circumstances, one of which was where the land was subject to an Environmental Permit, as was the case here. Any ongoing future regulations and management of the site was the preserve of the Environment Agency who were responsible for this.

(5) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked would the Cabinet Member please take this Member's recommendation that the recent Rothercard review should be used as a case study for Member Development as an example of good practice for how to conduct service reviews.

Councillor Allen also praised the work of not only Councillor Bennett-Sylvester, but Councillors Cooksey, McNeely and Sheppard.

Councillor Allen was happy to arrange for a discussion to take place at the next Member and Democratic Panel on 22nd March, 2023 to discuss learning from the review and the best way in which to share the case study with all Members.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester praised the process and the direct focus and the openness that had taken place with

the candidates and officers. This had facilitated attention to the issues and how best to take these forward. As an involved Member he found it of great value and an overall great experience.

Councillor Allen was glad that Councillor Bennett-Sylvester found the way in which the cross-party review was conducted to be an example of good practice.

(6) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained that since the discussion at the September Improving Places Select Commission asked what work had been done at looking at the possibility of redistributing neighbourhood CIL monies from Zone 1 charging areas to more deprived neighbourhoods?

Councillor Allen explained that following the discussion at the Improving Places Scrutiny Commission in September, 2022 the Neighbourhoods Team, together with Planning colleagues, have started to explore alternative approaches for distributing Local CIL in non-parished areas of the borough. This had included approaching Sheffield City Council to consider whether their approach would be suitable for Rotherham. It was noted, however, that the implications would have to be considered of their approach and redistribution carefully and discussions were certainly not at that stage yet. More work was needed to be done and Councillor Allen confirmed she would be happy to come back and share this work at Improving Places Select Commission in due course.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester welcomed the work and highlighted the point that 15% was a return back within a good Neighbourhood Policy. It was just the situation regarding zoning where 15% of Zone 1 Policies, which was over £60 sqm, was a lot more than for the deprived neighbourhoods, but he welcomed this approach.

Councillor Allen had no comment to make.

(7) Councillor Jones pointed out that at the entrance to Grange Park RMBC had a CCTV camera installed on the lamp column, so asked could the Cabinet Member please confirm how many requests for downloads had been received from South Yorkshire Police from that camera in the last two years.

Councillor Alam confirmed the Council had not received any requests for downloads. However, the Police were able to access cameras directly in order to access footage.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones had received a slightly different answer to the one given and believed there had been one request for a download from that camera which was taken at the time the gates were demolished on the site. At that time the camera was not working.

The camera was bought as a partnership between the wards of Keppel and Rotherham West to detect criminal behaviour such as the demolition of the gates. However, last year in Rotherham West there was a problem with drug dealing, violent behaviour including assault and a camera was requested which took sixteen weeks to be installed. During this time Rotherham West offered to buy Keppel out of their share of the camera and redeploy it to that area for the crime prevention, but was told that Members had refused the offer and insisted that the camera stayed in that location.

The Cabinet Member was, therefore, asked if it was thought this was a good use of public resources and money.

Councillor Alam explained that if the camera was purchased by two Wards then it should be up to the Elected Members where this was located. If the majority of Members wanted the camera to stay where it was then this should be supported.

(8) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked how did the new car parking charges for Thrybergh Country Park agreed (presumably) today compared to the return bus fare for a family of two adults and two children visiting the park from say Dalton.

Councillor Sheppard explained the service had contacted First Bus to determine the likely cost of travel from Dalton to Thrybergh by bus for two adults and two children. The operator had advised that the cheapest ticket would be a Family First Group Ticket which was priced at £9.00 if purchased via the app or £10.00 if purchased at the point of travel – this ticket covered up to five people and would allow for unlimited travel throughout the day.

In contrast if a family of four were to travel from Dalton to Thrybergh Country Park by car the likely cost of petrol based on a standard family car would be estimated at 63p per journey x 2 = £1.26 and parking was proposed in Fees and Charges at £2.50 per day. Therefore, the total expected cost of travel by car was estimated at £3.76.

The Council was committed to ensuring that all of its parks and green spaces were accessible to all residents, particularly those with low income and was proud to offer a high-quality experience at Thrybergh Country Park that remained affordable in this difficult and challenging economic climate.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained that if people did not have travel to access the site, then the X78 route covered not only Dalton but a range of deprived communities where it left the borough at Meadowbank. The Cabinet Member was asked if he could continue to look at the priority to find ways to ease access to the park for people travelling by public transport and to look at ways to improve crossing the A630 which not only made a physical, but also a financial

barrier for people travelling there by public transport.

Councillor Sheppard, as a fellow user of public transport, acknowledged the difficulty in finding the cheapest fares in the myriad of tickets that were available. Sadly, Rotherham was not successful as a region in the bid for transport to have the tap-on, tap-off that some other areas had and would have been a great way of accessing so many different spaces knowing the cheapest price for a ticket was being obtained.

(9) Councillor Jones asked with the re-opening of Grange Landfill from March 2023 did the Council have a road safety plan to tackle the 100 plus 30 tonne lorries that would be using the south bound A629.

Councillor Beck confirmed the Council had already considered implications arising from the operation of the site and had introduced a restriction on turning right out of the site. The Council would continue to review road safety requirements across the Borough and would take heed of any new information should it come to light. Moving forward the Council would continue to look at ways at improving road safety as the site becomes into operation.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones confirmed he had hoped to have heard about a comprehensive plan to safeguard both the children of Thorpe Hesley Primary School and the residents along the A629 in general. Basically the “no right turn” sign actually put people on the A629 and not away from it. During the Clean Air Action Zone consultation Councillor Jones took the opportunity to ask officers to put weight limits on all linking roads that run through Rotherham West Ward. This was done to keep lorries away from local primary schools and residents. He asked why was the opportunity not taken by anyone else to drive through road safety measures that could have been enforced under this national legislation.

Councillor Beck confirmed that as part of the current Clean Air Zone controls were put in place on Upper Wortley Road which related to northbound HGV movements from Rhymer’s roundabout (Tesco).

Any southbound prohibition would need to be considered as a new scheme, funding found and a new process in place. This would be kept under regular review in conjunction with local Members. The road safety programme would enable Ward Members to feed in any issues so technical officers could understand the full picture and he encouraged Councillor Jones to keep doing so.

(10) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked according to visitor surveys what percentage of visitors to Thrybergh Country Park do so by public or sustainable travel methods?

Councillor Sheppard explained In the latest visitor survey (2019) 10% of visitors to Thrybergh Country Park did so via public or sustainable travel

methods.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester explained he had people in his Ward where car ownership was much lower than the 90% who were travelling by car. He asked if this could be looked at in the next financial year for planning general improvements to enable people to walk, cycle and get to that park by other means. Already one footpath had been looked at, but stressed that people who did not own a car should be able to access their local park. This is more so when considerable investment had been to facilitate a new car park at the site.

Councillor Sheppard was always happy to promote many of sustainable ways of accessing country parks and green spaces and stressed the figures for Clifton Park were 31% and Rother Valley Country Park were 25% (2022 survey results).

Councillor Sheppard explained it did have an impact which bus services were available to enable people to travel by sustainable methods, but the Cabinet Member was always happy to look at other ways to improve.

(11) Councillor Jones explained in 1990 the Council's Environmental Health Department found lethal amounts of heavy metals, later described as "toxic" at a Kimberworth site. He asked what measures would the Council expect to be in place to safeguard children in this area and notify residents to stay away.

Councillor Beck understood the 1990 report did not reference "lethal" or "toxic" levels of materials as had been suggested. He again outlined the Environment Agency were responsible for regulating the site, including any risk associated with contamination.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones clarified that the actual levels mentioned on the 1990 report were classed as adverse to human health. They have since been revised and levels were now classed as lethal and were also described in a later report by the Planning Inspectorate as being toxic. The site had no signage to make anyone aware that it was toxic and so did not have the two metre high chain link fence and three strands of barbed wire that it should have had put in place after that enquiry. This was a planning condition and not one done by the Environment Agency. The site only had an intermittent fence around the site that anyone could easily access and for over thirty years due to the site not being monitored, managed or enforced which had put residents at an enhanced cancer risk who had walked over that site for generations. Councillor Jones, therefore, asked when was the Council going to do the planning enforcement on this site.

Councillor Beck confirmed he would look into any ongoing planning enforcement opportunities, but was assured that where there was cause or need the Council have responded to any issues accordingly.

Referring back to the contaminants the report in 1990 which showed 'above trigger levels' of contaminants which may pose a hazard to health, which the Council took note of as they did of the Planning Enquiry in 1992.

The Council continued to raise these issues with the Environment Agency and would continue to monitor progress.

It was the Environment Agency's role to regulate this site and any associated risks of contamination.

(12) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester confirmed that until 19th March Clifton Park Museum was hosting an excellent exhibition by the Silverwood Colliery Heritage Group. He asked what was the general strategy for supporting such groups and ensuring mining heritage was permanently remembered.

Councillor Sheppard also placed on record his thanks and appreciation to the Heritage Group for the excellent display, which was well worth a visit for the next two weeks. He confirmed the Museums, Arts and Heritage service worked closely with local communities and interest groups across the borough to ensure that its exhibition and events programme and collection represented the interests, history and heritage of a diverse range of communities.

The Rotherham Collection had a substantial collection documenting Rotherham's rich industrial heritage which was displayed in both permanent displays within Clifton Park Museum, and as part of temporary exhibitions such as the current exhibition celebrating the Silverwood Colliery.

The service would work with the group to consider how the exhibition could be developed into a larger show for the main temporary exhibition spaces and how objects from this project could be acquisitioned to the Rotherham Collection on a permanent basis.

Any Members visiting the test spaces on the first floor of the Museum would have seen the diverse collections and exhibitions on display. It really was a fantastic place to visit and interact and hopefully all Members would continue to support it.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester paid tribute to those involved in the display for their passion and making sure these stories were told, which was fantastic. One of the ambitions was to find a permanent home for the memorabilia and asked on behalf of Noma Platt, former Youth Worker, whether as part of Parkgate 200 the former miners/youth centre, which had fallen into some disrepair externally, the wider mining community could look to saving it in collaboration with other celebrations.

Councillor Sheppard pointed out that whilst the building would be unable to host anything as part of the 200 year celebration he appreciated the sentiment believed responsibility lay with CISWO, the building owners.

In terms of the exhibition it was excellent and anything that could be done by the service to assist in finding a permanent home the Cabinet Member was more than happy to collaborate to assist.

(13) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked what was the cost to service for dealing with escaped pigs in Thrybergh before Christmas and have the Council any hope of recovering any such costs?

Councillor Beck confirmed it was quite bizarre to receive the email about pigs being loose in Thrybergh. The Council incurred a small cost for the hire of the fencing used to contain the pigs, but largely costs have been incurred through the officer time spent dealing with the issue on behalf of local residents.

It would take some considerable work to identify these costs accurately, but it was estimated to be in the region of £1,500 to £2,500.

Recovering costs could be a challenge in such cases, but officers do pursue this wherever possible.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester pointed out this was an example of an over-stretched service going against antiquated legislation in something that was really a community concern, especially with regards to the grave yard at Thrybergh. He paid tribute to Lewis Coates and Emma Ellis who had to leave dealing with a case of illegal dog breeding in the borough to look out for this.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked that his comments be passed on and that when services were cash-strapped and come across bizarre incidents, then efforts should be made to recover costs where possible.

Councillor Beck, thanked Councillor Bennett-Sylvester with whom he had communicated with at the time, especially with damage to the grave yard. He confirmed he would gladly forward on the comments and hopefully would not see a repeat of an incident such as this ever again.

(14) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester referred how on 23rd December the Member of Parliament for Rother Valley tweeted support for a woman breaching a PSPO who was looking to intimidate women accessing abortion services in Birmingham. He asked could the Cabinet Member give assurance that should the need arise, this Council would also use PSPO's to protect women's rights to access health care.

The Leader confirmed there were specific circumstances for when PSPOs should only be used and each case would have to be considered on a case by case basis.

The Council would look to take the necessary steps as far as it could to protect women from abuse and harassment and if this was to access health care, then the Council would.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester believed this to be a very worrying trend in politics in terms of the far right taking control of the Conservative Party launching what could be termed as culture wars. Basically as a Christian people were taught to pray privately and not on street, not intimidate others and make a decision on what could be the worst time of their lives. He asked for assurances that should these kind of attempts to weaponize religion by the right that the Leader would offer support in making sure services for people were properly protected.

The Leader confirmed Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was correct and that the thrust of what he was saying was to protect people's essential rights. He was also correct that there was a political trend to use some of these movements which seemed to originate on the other side of the pond in terms of political life here in Britain.

The Leader was more confident that the reach was limited and people were more likely to have more common sense and be more confident in their religious beliefs and reasons in this country than our friends on the other side of the world. He agreed everyone needed to be vigilant where this affected people's lives and religion.

(15) **Councillor Castledine-Dack** asked following the tragic death of a teenager on Laughton Common Road, would the Council consider implementing a proper footpath along this increasingly-popular walking route

Councillor Beck confirmed this was a very distressing incident and also referred to another on Swinston Hill Road a few weeks after. All thoughts remained with the family and friends of those who die. As was the case with any road traffic collision which resulted in loss of life or serious injury, the Council was working with road safety partner organisations to analyse the circumstances that led to the incident and identify any patterns and possible causes.

Until the outcome of the South Yorkshire Police investigation and the Coroner's Report was received it would not be appropriate to comment on the specific details involved today, or in regard of any possible improvements to the route, but the Cabinet Member gave his assurance he and the service would consider the findings carefully.

In a supplementary question Councillor Castledine-Dack confirmed she would pass this information on to the families concerned, but appreciated the Cabinet Member was limited as to what he could say at this stage. She just wanted to raise on their behalf their concerns about using this

route to walk between Laughton Common and Thurcroft. It was a national speed limit road, there was no footpath and limited lighting, but asked in terms of looking at forward strategy whether this could be looked into and placing this formally on record.

Councillor Beck confirmed he would and would offer support to the family. He acknowledged the petition that was circulating which he would respond to in due course. This week he had asked officers of the Council and those of the Safer Road Partnership to look at some awareness raising as a Local Authority to ensure similar incidents did not occur anywhere else in the borough or further afield. Both incidents took place in and around the Dinnington area were very similar in nature.

(16) Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked the Leader to report on actions by this Council in dealing with the recent protest by fascists seeking to intimidate refugees in Manvers and the larger counter protest by local patriots looking to defend this country's values of decency and tolerance.

The Leader confirmed the Police were the lead partners when managing any protest activity. The Council worked closely with the Police to respond to any requests for services and in this case by supporting proactive actions around potential road closures, access to any CCTV assets, support during the planning process as well as updating local Councillors and engaging with the Community. On the day of the protests the Council worked in the Police command suite with a strategic lead based at Riverside House.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bennett-Sylvester turned the Leader's attention to a conversation they had had previously about language use and detail deliberately chosen in the question. He was proud of the indecent intolerance, but when there were some Elected Members stating that the Council should not be dealing with wider problems and discussing issues such as Rwanda and deportation or hate crime. He reiterated those discussions did have repercussions locally and even the current Leader of the Opposition had raised the question of being able to give addresses. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester himself had given his address and was yet to hear anything. He wished to point out that national issues were still worth discussing as national politics impacted locally.

The Leader agreed with Councillor Bennett-Sylvester and over the past twenty years it had shown the world was a very small place. The consequences of events thousands of miles away have repercussions here within twenty hours of travel. It was correct that the way Members conducted themselves, the language used and the way to approach discussions, which were sometimes difficult, was important. This often reverberated out into communities and people had legitimate differences, but this should be dealt with in a way that was respectful.

(17) Councillor Jones referred last year he twice asked the Cabinet

Member to confirm the status of the access road at Grange Park. In his last response he said that the Council owned the land, but not the surface of the road so asked did he still stand by this comment.

Councillor Beck confirmed he did.

In a supplementary question Councillor Jones confirmed that since the last meeting he had provided the Council and the Action Group Solicitor with a document which brought into question the validity of the site owner's claim to a right of access. As part of the follow up work aerial photographs and maps have been examined to prove that the Council laid the road as part of the site remodelling in around 1976 to incorporate a car park. This work was undertaken by a Council contractor. He also had sight of the reinstatement plan for Phase 1 done by the current owners of the site which again clearly showed the operator installing a temporary whole road from the site to join the same tarmac road. This was back in 1992. Again the Action Group have supplied this information to the Council. He, therefore, asked could the Cabinet Member please tell him when the Council was going to stop playing games on the ownership of the road and start seriously looking at legal action to stop the trespass and unregulated use of the accessway owned by the Council.

Councillor Beck was only able to comment on the up-to-date legal position. He reiterated that the access road to the Grange Landfill site is on land owned by the Council and the owner of the tip had a right of way over the land. The Council had a duty not to obstruct the use of the access way, but it had no duty whatsoever to maintain the access route in a useable condition. The Council was not, therefore, responsible for the access road itself.

(18) Councillor Castledine-Dack asked what steps was the Council taking to engage with businesses and residents about the future of Dinnington High Street.

Councillor Lelliott confirmed the Council set out a strong case for investment in Dinnington in its Levelling Up Fund Bid. The bid set out proposals to tackle blight and create a new commercial square linking the parking areas, bus station and residential areas to the high street. Disappointingly, the Government decided not to support the bid.

The bid was developed in consultation with, and the express support of, local Ward Members, Dinnington St John's Council and the local MP, representing local community interests including residents and local business owners. Information from Dinnington St John's Neighbourhood Plan was used along with analysis from the Round 1 bid, and data collected locally, in order to develop proposals that were reflective of local priorities.

Since the announcement that the Government had not backed the bid, the

Council had been working to understand what other funding options may be available for the area.

It was hoped and expected that the development of proposals outside the constrained and artificial windows of Government funding competitions would allow further involvement of residents and local businesses in shaping plans.

(19) Councillor Castledine-Dack asked would the Council invite Ed Clancy, South Yorkshire Active Travel Commissioner, to visit the villages of Dinnington ward including Laughton Common, Laughton-en-le-Morthen, Firbeck, Letwell and Carr, to see the challenges residents have in safe cycling and walking in their localities.

Councillor Beck confirmed yes, he would be happy to invite Ed Clancy to visit the Borough, to see some of the work done and share future plans which included Dinnington.

In February this year the Council adopted a new Cycling Strategy which set out ambitious plans for improving cycling and walking for across the Borough which would benefit local communities in providing accessible, low-cost travel solutions while also helping improve public health and the environment.

The Council had been busy in recent years delivering cycling schemes such as the dedicated cycle lanes on Fenton Road, the new segregated cycle lanes on Sheffield Road which would link up with further phases to connect the centres of Rotherham with Sheffield.

In addition, only a few days ago the Council submitted a further bid for over £926,000 funding under the Government's Active Travel 4 programme which once awarded would provide further funding to develop active travel proposals including in Wath, Maltby - and indeed Dinnington. There would be a period of consultation that Members and residents could feed into which would be further developed.

155. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.