

**COUNCIL MEETING
29th November, 2023**

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

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

44. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor welcomed Councillor Harper to the Chamber for his first Council meeting as the newly Elected Member for Kilnhurst and Swinton East following the recent By Election. The Mayor stated that he had been extremely busy since the last Council meeting and a list of all of his engagements could be found at Appendix A to the Mayor's Letter.

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Resolved:- That apologies for absence be received from Councillors Barker, Barley, Baum-Dixon, Castledine-Dack, Hall, Havard, Roche and Whomersley.

46. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 4th October, 2023, be approved for signature by the Mayor, subject to a clerical correction to include Councillor Foster in the list of apologies.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Allen

47. PETITIONS

There were no petitions presented at the meeting.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest was made:

Agenda Item	Councillor	Interest Type	Nature of Interest
Item 13 – Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Selective Licensing	Councillor Tinsley	Non-pecuniary	Selective Licence Holder
Item 13 – Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Selective Licensing	Councillor Sheppard	Non-pecuniary	Personal property is within Parkgate which is within a Selective Licensing designated area.

49. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were four public questions submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12:

1. Dr .Umamah Yusufi:

We welcome the condemnation of antisemitism in the motion by the Conservative Councillors, but where is the condemnation of rising Islamophobia given its ugly history in Rotherham? What action will the Council take to unify our fractured community, especially in the wake of inflammatory and divisive comments - inciting hate against overwhelmingly peaceful protestors - propagated by Conservative leadership in recent weeks?

Councillor Alam thanked Dr. U. Yusufi for the question and confirmed that the motion proposed today by Conservative Councillors was to be debated later on the agenda and certain political parties would want to ensure that all racial and religious discrimination was being called out. Just as it could not be right for Jewish residents to suffer as a result of the actions of a foreign government, so too it would not be right for Muslims to face Islamophobia either. Both those twin evils must be called out.

The comments made by the previous Home Secretary recently have certainly not been helpful. Despite being sacked, she did not apologise. Members of her own party, such as Baroness Warsi, have criticised her comments.

The Council will continue championing inclusion and supporting the Police in their work to tackle hate crimes, along with Community Safety Partnership to try to bring justice to those people who were victims, but also to increase understanding and adopt a restorative approach that helped to genuinely change attitudes and bring longer term solutions.

Councillor Alam also worked with faith leaders from all the different communities across Rotherham and was pleased to say that everyone was calling for calm and solidarity.

In her supplementary question, Dr. U. Yusufi raised concerns about how the protests in support of a ceasefire had been characterised by the media and Government. She asked Councillor Alam to clarify whether the Government will be asked to clarify or retract its comments regarding them being hate marches and inciteful of hate when they have been overwhelmingly peaceful and calling for peace in Palestine?

Councillor Alam confirmed that he had sat on the South Yorkshire Independent Police Protest Panel since 2016 and confirmed that the marches have been peaceful. It had only been certain members of the Conservative Government that had tried to demonise the Muslim community. Councillor Alam stated that the comments made by the previous Home Secretary did aggravate the right wing which caused issues. It was confirmed that under legislation, protests could not be banned unless there was a threat to life. Councillor Alam called on the Conservative Members present and the Government to take some responsibility. It was not illegal to protest or fly the Palestinian flag.

2. Dr. Mehnaz Yusufi:

I wholeheartedly support Rotherham's dedication to safeguarding children and celebrating the world's first Children's Capital of Culture. I am deeply anguished and haunted by the murder of innocent, beautiful and blameless Palestinian children. I urge our Council to write to the Conservative Government, expressing Rotherham's citizens' condemnation of their immoral support for Israel's illegal murder of Palestinian children and civilians.

Councillor Alam thanked Dr. M. Yusufi for the question and explained the events that have unfolded around the world have been, and remain, extremely concerning. Every life that was lost was one too many and this Council's thoughts were with those affected by the recent conflict.

Councillor Alam confirmed that he had written to the Government setting out his concerns about the loss of life taking place in Gaza but was glad to hear of the pause in the conflict and the release of some hostages. He was sure that all Members would join him with thoughts and prayers for a lasting and permanent peace in the region. Councillor Alam also confirmed that he had raised issues about UK aid to Palestine and how it was reaching vulnerable communities.

In the supplementary question, Dr. M. Yusufi asked what will happen after the ceasefire?

Councillor Alam stated that the position under International Law was that, even during a conflict, innocent people should not be targeted. 15,000 Palestinians had died including 6,000 children and 4,000 women. In Israel, around 1200 people had died. There must, therefore, be a permanent ceasefire to prevent any further loss of life. Councillor Alam was praying for a peaceful solution.

3. Sahar Alshami:

I applauded Rotherham Council's compassionate response to Ukrainians and flying their flag. Will the Council express its empathy and support for Rotherham's Palestinian community, families like mine, in the same way? We are the indigenous people of Palestine, we are being ethnically cleansed; a genocide against my people, murdering thousands of innocent Palestinian children. Please represent us, and our humanity.

Councillor Alam thanked Ms. Alshami for the question and stated that Member's hearts go out to Ms. Alshami and her family, and all those innocent people caught up in the terrible violence in the Middle East.

Rotherham Council and communities across the Borough had a proud history of supporting those who have fled war in their home countries, most recently in both Ukraine and Afghanistan.

The Council remained deeply concerned about the loss of lives in Gaza and indeed in Israel.

In terms of the flag, the Council followed Government guidance in terms of flying flags in times of conflict situations so Councillor Alam could not, unfortunately, make a specific commitment about that here today but was sure all Members have heard what had been said and the request and that will be part of considerations in the future.

In the supplementary question, Ms. Alshami stated that she wanted some visible sign from the Council that showed empathy for Palestinians living in Rotherham and asked what could be done to support them?

Councillor Alam confirmed that support had been offered through donations which included support for foundations that had medical schools in Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank. There were many charitable events that were happening to raise funds for aid.

4. Hafsa Yusufi:

Will this Council call upon the UK Government to end its unconditional support for the Israeli government, and to condemn the Israeli government for its blatant commission of crimes against humanity?

Councillor Alam thanked Ms. Yusufi for the question and stated that of course wherever any government commits crimes against humanity, he condemned those crimes unequivocally. As mentioned in a previous answer, he had written to the Government to call for Britain to do all that it could to bring about an ending to violence and to support a lasting and secure peace in the Middle East.

In 2014, Parliament voted in support of a two-state solution, and Councillor Alam stated that this must be implemented to have an independent, sovereign Palestine and Israel as its own state.

Councillor Alam also informed Ms. Yusufi that the UN Convention could set up a Commission to look at human rights and ensure any abuses stop. Councillor Alam had also previously written asking for the UN Peacekeeping Force to be deployed immediately to Palestine to stop innocent people dying.

In the supplementary question, Ms. Yusufi thanked Councillor Alam for his writings to the Government but asked the Council as a whole to write to the Government demanding a permanent ceasefire as Sheffield Council had previously done? Sheffield Council had also joined the Coalition Against the Israeli Apartheid. Would Rotherham Council do the same?

Councillor Alam informed Ms. Yusufi that the Leader of the Council had written to the Government regarding the conflict. He hoped that the leaders of the other political groups on the Council had listened to the request.

50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no such items that required the exclusion of the press and public from this meeting.

51. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader presented his statement and started by welcoming Councillor Harper to the Council. The Leader then raised the flooding incident that had taken place in Catcliffe, Treeton and other areas across the Borough in October 2023. 180 homes had been affected and funds of around £170,000 had been administered in support of those households. The Leader praised the exceptional response of the staff which had been huge in the immediate aftermath. The Leader stated that, even with the exceptional levels of rainfall, the flooding should not have been as extensive as it was if it should have happened at all. Over the coming months it would be important to understand the facts and influences on that to come to the right conclusions for the future.

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To conclude, the Leader confirmed that Thurcroft Library had now been officially opened. This was the latest stage in the investment in libraries across the Borough.

Questions on the statement were then invited. Councillor Adam Carter started by offering his congratulations to Councillor Harper on behalf of the Liberal Democrat group. He also agreed with the Leader that the flooding in Catcliffe and Treeton should not have happened, at least to the extent that it did.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester welcomed Councillor Harper and also passed on his thanks to the officers involved with the communication of information in relation to the floods. He asked the Leader if there had been an increase in demand for temporary accommodation and if, therefore, there was a need for additional accommodation across the Borough? If there were additional pressures, how long were these expected to continue?

Councillor Griffin stated that houses in his Ward of Whiston had also been flooded and he asked the Leader if he agreed that such homeowners should be provided with complete and accurate information about the steps that were being taken to reduce that risk and if so, would the Leader agree that it was unhelpful for a Member of Parliament to communicate with residents in a way that was partial, incomplete and inaccurate?

Councillor Ball welcomed Councillor Harper. Councillor Ball also informed the Chamber that there had been three deaths in three weeks on roads in the Borough. He offered his thoughts to the families of those involved and praised the work of the emergency services. Councillor Ball questioned why there was no longer a Cabinet Member who was dedicated 100% to transport following a rise in concerns?

Councillor Mills asked a question in relation to the flooding and why some residents in Ravenfield were denied access to sandbags?

In response to the questions, the Leader agreed with Councillor A. Carter that they were of one mind when it came to the priorities in relation to the flooding.

In response to Councillor Bennett-Sylvester's question, the Leader confirmed that the communications team were represented in the room and his thanks was noted. A written response would be provided in relation to the numbers in temporary accommodation.

The Leader noted Councillor Griffin's concerns in relation to properties in Whiston that were flooded or nearly flooded. He agreed that, particularly when residents are in difficult, stressful situations, they rely on all elected representatives to be fair and accurate with the information provided. It was not helpful for any representative, least of all a Member of

Parliament, to be making statements that were not full. The Leader expressed his support for the decisions taken by the Council to put money into flood defence schemes, such as those at Whiston, and it was hoped that those schemes would be funded to completion over the next couple of years.

In response to Councillor Ball, the Leader confirmed that he had taken on the responsibility of transport himself and would keep Members up-to-date with his Cabinet appointments as and when required.

It was confirmed that a written response would be provided to Councillor Mills in relation to sandbag availability in Ravenfield.

52. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Councillor Ball asked the following questions on the Cabinet Minutes:

1. In relation to Minute No. 46 of Cabinet held on 18th September, 2023, Councillor Ball asked for an update in relation to the selection of Labour candidates for the 2024 local elections. He asked if the Leader could confirm if there were sitting Councillors, some of whom were Chairs etc., not able to sit again as Labour Councillors and if so what new information had come forward to deselect these Councillors and what confidence did it give to the residents of Rotherham that this was happening?
2. In relation to Minute No. 65 of Cabinet held on 16th October, 2023, Councillor Ball stated that a group campaigning about cemeteries had been promised monthly meetings. He asked if this would be extended to all of the Borough as he understood that most local cemeteries were having issues and would welcome the chance to have monthly meetings to look at their problems?
3. In relation to Minute No. 72 of Cabinet held on 16th October, 2023, Councillor Ball stated that every one of the fast charges that he had visited in the last month in Rotherham had either been vandalised or not working. In the Climate Working Group he had said that these would not be viable for Rotherham and that a forecourt way of doing things would provide jobs and would be better to provide security to these points. What had been done about this to save the taxpayers of Rotherham money and would the Leader pause the Cabinet decision for the electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure in Rotherham whilst this matter is looked in to? Councillor Ball also asked what had happened to the Climate Working Group; had it been disbanded?
4. In relation to Minute No. 76 of Cabinet held on 16th October, 2023, Councillor Ball stated that it was good to see houses being built that catered for all in terms of accessibility. He asked the Leader whether he agreed that this should be the standard for any new housing being built in the Borough and for it not to be dismissed like in the case of

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the Planning Chair who informed him that it would cost too much and that developers would not do, casting out those who were disabled and needed these types of houses?

Councillor Tinsley asked:

1. Are there any up-to-date figures on the number of inspections that have taken place in relation to selective licensing and was the Council sending out letters to properties to highlight ways to report any issues they might have with houses in selective licensing areas?

In relation to the first question asked for Councillor Ball, the Leader stated that announcements on the selection of Labour candidates for the May 2024 local elections would be made in due course and he would not speculate on those processes.

In relation to the second question from Councillor Ball, the Leader stated that Councillor Ball had misunderstood and there were no monthly public meetings in relation to cemeteries with any group. There were a group of people who had expressed particular concerns in relation to Muslim burials and the Council had been working with that group over a period of time to try and resolve those issues. The Leader urged Councillor Ball to raise any concerns regarding cemeteries with the appropriate Cabinet Member or officers.

In relation to the third question from Councillor Ball, the Leader stated that Councillor Ball was entitled to his opinion about the best way of providing EV charges but confirmed that the decision taken by the Cabinet would not be halted. The decision had been made; it had been through the scrutiny process and had been available for call-in. The policies that had been agreed would be followed in a democratic and appropriate way.

In relation to the final question from Councillor Ball, the Leader stated that different homes were required by different people. The Leader was glad that the Council was putting money from its own resources into ensuring that there were more homes with appropriate access for people with mobility issues. However, that was clearly not necessary for everybody, and it would not be the thing to do for every single home. However, the Council continued to take those needs into account and provision had been made in new homes that were being brought forward.

In relation to the question from Councillor Tinsley, the Leader confirmed that he would provide a written response as he did not have the figures to hand.

Resolved:- That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 18th September and 16th October, 2023 be received.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Allen

53. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2023 - FINAL PROPOSALS

Consideration was given to the report which had been presented to the Cabinet on 20th November, 2023. The report detailed the responses and final proposals following the Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2023 that had been undertaken between 2nd October and 30th October, 2023. The Cabinet had agreed the timetable for the review in September 2023 as per Minute No. 55. 20 responses had been received commenting on 27 polling districts. A summary of the responses and the Returning Officer's comments were provided in Appendix 3 to the Cabinet report.

As a result of the representations made during the consultation, the final proposals contained 4 changes in addition to the initial proposals:-

- a) Brinsworth Ward: It is proposed to amend the polling district boundary between BWD and BWC to move Nos. 69 to 83 Whitehill Lane and 4 properties on Orchard Way from polling district BWD to BWC.
- b) Brinsworth Ward: It is proposed to move the polling district boundary between BWD and BWB to move Nos. 58 to 68 Brinsworth Lane from BWD to BWB.
- c) Brinsworth Ward: It is proposed to move the polling district boundary between BWD and BWE to move No. 56 Brinsworth Lane from BWD to BWE.
- d) Greasbrough Ward: It is proposed that Greasbrough Library is designated the polling place for GRA polling district, instead of Greasbrough Primary School.

Further details of the final proposals and the polling place scheme were set out in Appendix 2 to the Cabinet report.

Resolved:-

1. That the submissions made in respect of the review of polling districts and polling places for the Borough of Rotherham be noted.
2. That the adoption of the polling district boundaries outlined in Appendices 2 and 5 of the Report to Cabinet be approved.
3. That the final proposals for polling places as detailed in Appendix 2 of the Cabinet report be approved.
4. That the Electoral Registration Officer be requested to make the necessary amendments to the polling districts to take effect from publication of the revised register on 1st December, 2023.

5. That the Electoral Registration Officer be requested to make the necessary amendments to the RVB and RVD polling district boundaries to take effect from publication of the revised register following the next UK Parliamentary General Election.
6. That the power to designate polling places in accordance with section 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 be agreed and continue to be delegated to the Chief Executive.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Allen

54. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - TRANSFER OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FUNCTIONS TO SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYOR - MAY 2024

Further to Minute No. 95 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th November, 2023, consideration was given to the report which detailed how the Government was proposing to make an Order that would provide for the Mayor of South Yorkshire to exercise the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in relation to South Yorkshire with effect from May 2024.

The text of the draft Order had not been finalised or provided, but was likely to include the following:-

1. Provide for all functions presently exercised by the PCC to be functions exercisable by the Mayor for South Yorkshire with effect from the [] May 2024.
2. Transfer all property, rights, liabilities of the PCC to the MCA, with future decisions on such matters being vested in the Mayor.
3. Provide for the continuity of the operation by substituting the MCA for the PCC in any legislation/instruments/contracts etc.
4. Deal with financial year end issues.
5. Reduce the current Mayoral term in order to align the Mayoral and PCC election cycles from May 2024.

During the meeting it was confirmed that 4 out of the 5 other local authorities in South Yorkshire had already given their consent. This meant that the decision made by Rotherham Council would not change the outcome, but the Leader thought it important that the Council as a whole voted on the matter.

Resolved:-

1. That the draft Order to provide for the Mayor of South Yorkshire to exercise the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner receive consent.

Mover: - Councillor Read

Seconder: - Councillor Allen

55. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Further to Minute No. 92 of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th November, 2023, consideration was given to the report which outlined the review process and presented an unamended but reviewed Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy. The Policy had been adopted in 2020 and was required by law to be reviewed every 3 years. The review process, which included a period of public consultation that commenced in July 2023, had concluded and the outcome of the review consultation had informed a finalised Statement of Licensing Policy.

The current Policy had been reviewed by Licensing Officers and it had been determined that it complied with all relevant requirements and therefore required no amendment. The final unamended version of the Policy was now brought before Council for adoption. The proposed Policy was attached to the report as Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report.

Councillor Ellis, in her role as Chair of the Licensing Board, confirmed that the Board fully supported the recommendation to adopt the Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy 2023.

During the meeting, Councillor Ball asked if 100% of premises had disabled access. Councillor Lelliott confirmed that this was her understanding, but she would raise the question with officers and provide a written response.

Resolved:

1. That Council formally adopt the proposed Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy 2023 (attached as Appendix 1.)

Mover:- Councillor Lelliott

Seconder:- Councillor Ellis

56. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - IMPACT OF SELECTIVE LICENSING

Further to Minute No. 94 of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th November, 2023, consideration was given to the report which outlined the response of the Cabinet to the recommendations made by Scrutiny following their review on the impact of Selective Licensing.

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On 18 September 2023 Cabinet received a report titled 'Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Impact of Selective Licensing.' The report gave a detailed account of the current scheme outlining its strengths and weaknesses. The report identified 4 key risk factors to the success of the scheme:

1. pandemic-related delays,
2. a shortage of experienced inspectors,
3. a rising cost of living
4. complexity of measuring impact on deprivation

The review had produced 8 recommendations which had all been accepted by Cabinet:

- a) That re-inspection be prioritised for landlords whose properties have required action previously.
- b) Consideration be given as to how the Council may support retention of experienced inspectors already in the Council's employment.
- c) That consideration be given to incentivising responsible landlords, and, where there is a proven track record, empowering landlords to self-assess, provided that the service can still obtain assurances that decent standards are maintained.
- d) That consideration be given to managing expectations around Selective Licensing as a measure focused on the health of residents, rather than aesthetics or regeneration.
- e) That consideration be given to how uptake of the cost-of-living support offer among families in Selective Licensing areas may be further promoted and monitored, with a view to identifying gaps and promoting financial inclusion.
- f) Given the complexity of measuring impact on deprivation and difficulty in improving relative levels of deprivation, that consideration be given to how internal measures may better reflect the real impact of the scheme.
- g) That a joined-up approach be sought with relevant Council strategies and services, with partner and voluntary sector organisations and with resident-led initiatives prior to any future Selective Licensing declaration.
- h) That engagement with landlords and with tenants be considered alongside any response to the above recommendations, and that the response to the above recommendations be subject to the learning derived from continued engagement with landlords and tenants.

An update in relation to proposed actions was provided at paragraph 2.1 of the Cabinet report. During the meeting, the Deputy Leader advised that 5 of the recommendations were in progress and the other 3 would be considered as part of any future schemes.

During the meeting, the Deputy Leader gave her thanks to the Members of Scrutiny who had carried out the review.

A number of Opposition Members indicated that they would be voting against the recommendation. They felt that the recommendations did not help resolve the issues identified with Selective Licensing areas and further work was required. The Chair of the Improving Places Select Commission stated that work would continue on the matter.

Councillor Tinsley asked for an update on the number of inspection that were taking place. The Deputy Leader confirmed that a written response would be provided.

Resolved:

1. That Council note Cabinet's response to the recommendations as summarised in the Cabinet's Response to the Scrutiny review – Selective Licensing at Appendix 1.

Mover:- Councillor Allen

Seconder:- Councillor Cusworth

57. CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - MODERN SLAVERY

Further to Minute No. 73 of the Cabinet meeting held on 16th October, 2023, consideration was given to the report which outlined the response of Cabinet to the recommendations made by Scrutiny following their review on modern slavery. The spotlight review took place on 1st November, 2022. The methodology and invited witnesses were detailed in Section 2.2 of the report submitted to Cabinet in October 2023.

There were 9 recommendations which had all been accepted by Cabinet:

- a) That the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) consider rolling out a targeted learning and development offer/campaign to raise awareness of modern slavery, how to spot the signs and risks and how to raise concerns and make referrals:
 - To front line staff across agencies.
 - To Elected Members.
 - To the public and targeted business such as letting agencies (commercial and residential)
- b) That the SRP considers mapping the local modern slavery landscape to identify high risk industries and 'hot spots.'

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- c) That consideration be given to establishing an RMBC internal governance group, including representation from services who may encounter modern slavery (e.g., Procurement, Licensing, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Housing, Neighbourhoods and Social Care.)
- d) That consideration is given to how young adults at risk of experiencing modern slavery are safeguarded during the transition from Children to Adult Services and are age assessed appropriately.
- e) That consideration is given to developing referral pathways to ensure that modern slavery victims (both adult and child) have access to appropriate support (housing, advocacy, mental health) on a timely basis.
- f) That consideration is given to re-launching the Strategic Partnership Information Sharing Group at the earliest opportunity to improve the way that agencies can share data and intelligence, including examining how IT systems can work better together.
- g) That consideration is given to widening the levels of investigation and auditing of contracts procured by the Council to focus on the 'layers' of sub-contractors, including binding specifications to audit or 'dip-sample' contracts along the supply chain.
- h) That consideration is given to how the Procurement Team can engage with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) supply chain advisor to improve processes, joint working, and awareness.
- i) That consideration be given to allow victim advocates to make recommendations to Housing Assessment Panels on behalf of victims of modern slavery.

A table containing the actions associated with these recommendations was set out at section 1.4 of the Cabinet report.

Resolved:

1. That Council note Cabinet's response to the recommendations as summarised in the Cabinet's Response to the Scrutiny review – Modern Slavery at Appendix 1.

Mover:- Councillor Alam

Seconder:- Councillor Cusworth

58. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL - MEMBERS ALLOWANCES

Consideration was given to the report which set out the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel on Member Allowances. Section 15 of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2001 on Members' Allowances set out the requirement to have an Independent Remuneration Panel to consider any changes or amendments to the Members' Allowances Scheme every 4 years. To comply with the Legislation to undertake the required review, the Council had to appoint a panel to conduct the review.

The panel comprised of:

- Carrie Sudbury, Chief Executive, Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce.
- Shafiq Hussain, Chief Executive, Voluntary Action Rotherham.
- Rev. Phil Batchford, Vicar of Rotherham and St. Paul's Masbrough.

It met on 17th and 31st October and 16th November, 2023. Members of the Council were given the opportunity to consult with Members of the Panel as part of the review and various Councillors were heard from.

The Member's Allowance Scheme was last reviewed in April 2015 and agreed by Council in May 2015. The Panel recommended that the amounts agreed at this time remain in place for a period of 2 years. After this period the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances should be reviewed in line with the Retail Price Index. In July 2017 Council approved a 1.15% reduction in Members' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances in line with amendments to staff terms and conditions being introduced. Since that time no uplift for inflation had been added meaning that Members' Allowances had been static since 2017. In the same period the Bank of England calculator provided that inflation amounts to 27%.

A benchmarking exercise was carried out to compare the allowances of Councils across Yorkshire. Details of these were included in appendices 2 and 3 to the report.

Following the review, the Panel made the following recommendations:

- (i) The Basic Members' Allowance (and Allowances for those co-opted) for 2023-24 be increased by 5%.
- (ii) That the Special Responsibility Allowance be increased by 5% for 2023-24.
- (iii) That additional Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should only be paid for one special responsibility position.

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- (iv) That annual increases in Basic Allowances should be in line with the average Local Government pay awards for staff below Chief Officer level.
- (v) That annual increases in Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid at half (50%) of the average Local Government pay award for staff below Chief Officer level.
- (vi) That travel allowances should be increased in line with staff travel allowances and should change as and when the locally agreed rates change.
- (vii) No Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.
- (viii) Increases in allowances to be effective from 1st April, 2023.

During the debate, a number of Councillors indicated that they would not be supporting the recommendations. Councillors Ball and Bacon stated that it was unfair to increase Members Allowances and increase Council Tax. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester questioned the suitability of the Panel as to their experience of living on a low income. He also stated that Rotherham Council should have the lowest allowances as recompense following the publication of the Jay Report (2014) and the Casey Report (2015.) Councillor Reynolds thought the timing of the recommendations was inappropriate.

Councillor Adam Carter thanked the Panel for the work they had done on the review.

In supporting the recommendations, Councillors Hoddinott and Cusworth stated that every resident in the Borough should be able to stand for election and an increased allowance was required to help that happen. The allowance was still lower than it was in 2014 but the increases would allow Councillors to continue to put food on their tables without being excessive. Councillor Atkin stated that Members of Parliament voted on their own pay rises every year.

Councillor Wilson stated that if Members did not support the increase, they did not have to accept it if it was approved. They could contact the Head of Democratic Services to forgo all or part of their allowance.

Councillor Hoddinott asked that feedback be given to the Panel regarding the omission of carer's allowance from the review.

In responding, the Leader stated that the Council needed to be as accessible as possible to all in the Borough and as such, it was not sustainable to keep the freeze on Members Allowances. He disagreed with the view that Rotherham should have the worst allowances because

of its history as this would not lead to improvements. He also urged any Members that did not want to take the increase to contact officers.

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Approve the following recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panel following a review of the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Members' Allowances Scheme:
 - a. (The Basic Members' Allowance (and Allowances for those co-opted) for 2023-24 be increased by 5%.
 - b. That the Special Responsibility Allowance be increased by 5% for 2023-24.
 - c. That additional Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) should only be paid for one special responsibility position.
 - d. That annual increases in Basic Allowance should be in line with the average Local Government pay awards for staff below Chief Officer level.
 - e. That annual increases in Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid at half (50%) of the average Local Government pay award for staff below Chief Officer level.
 - f. That travel allowances should be increased in line with staff travel allowances and should change as and when the locally agreed rates change.
 - g. No Special Responsibility Allowance should be paid for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.
 - h. Increases in allowances to be effective from 1st April, 2023.
2. Thank the members of the IRP for their detailed consideration of the Scheme and their service on the Panel.

Mover:- Councillor Read

Seconder:- Councillor Allen

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19(2), a recorded vote was requested and taken for this item as follows:

For: Councillors Alam, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Aveyard, Baker-Rodgers, Beck, Bird, Browne, Clark, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, Ellis, Foster, Griffin, Haleem, Harper, Hoddinott, Hughes, Keenan, Lelliott, McNeely, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Sheppard, Taylor, Thompson, Wilson, Wyatt and Yaseen.

Against: Councillors Bacon, Ball, Bennett-Sylvester, Burnett, A. Carter, C. Carter, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Elliott, Fisher, Hunter, Jones, Mills, Miro, Reynolds, Tarmey and Tinsley.

There were 32 votes for and 17 votes against. The recommendations were therefore approved.

59. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR BRINSWORTH

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward update for Brinsworth as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

An update report had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Charlotte Carter noted:

- The work done with the local community such as Crafty Talk, a church lunch club and a local history group.
- The work done with local schools such as environment days, bulb planting, litter picks, supporting an allotment and pond restoration.
- That over 100 trees had been planted across Brinsworth.
- The launch of the "Adopt a Tree Scheme" in the Brinsworth. It was hoped this would be reproduced across the Borough.
- The reduction in anti-social behaviour through multi-agency working and securing Borough-wide funding streams.
- The new shelter that had been installed on Brinsworth playing fields which had been well utilised.
- The purchase of new play equipment for Howarth Park.
- The development of an interactive trail around Brinsworth to encourage families to walk and spend more time outdoors.
- The work with the Towns and Villages Fund to improve the parking outside of the shops.

Councillor Adam Carter noted:

- The engagement with school children and community groups.
- The tree planting.
- The value of the residents of Brinsworth, particularly the volunteers who helped bring the community together.
- The improvements in devolving responsibility away from the Town Hall to Ward Councillor and local residents.
- The tree-whip giveaway.

Both Members placed on record their thanks to the Neighbourhoods Working Team.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

Mover:- Councillor C Carter

Seconder:- Councillor A Carter

60. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR KEPPEL

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November, 2018, consideration was given to the annual Ward update for Keppel as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy.

An update report had been provided as part of the agenda. However, each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Browne noted, in particular, the improvement in safety and appearance of St Johns Green:

- The rundown quadrangle on Kimberworth Park estate comprised shops, flats, a medical centre, dental centre and church.
- As there was no Council run facility on the estate, it was very difficult for the residents to access resources and support.
- The centre itself was in great disrepair and was a magnet for anti-social behaviour and drug dealing.
- The plan was to develop a one-stop resource centre in the heart of the community at St John's Green. An empty commercial unit would be taken over for the benefit of the community.
- The centre would provide a meeting place for groups and enable residents to access more support and resources from the Council.
- The plan will involve multi-agency working with a large range of partners such as community groups, the Police, the Council, the NHS etc.
- The funding will come from the Towns and Village Fund, Lottery Funding, SYP grants and other options will be explored with the Council.

Councillor Foster noted:

- The use of community infrastructure money to improve playground facilities across the Ward. Additional external funding would also be used to create a new facility.
- The work with local schools to improve the local environment, improve biodiversity in schools and raise awareness of climate issues.
- The work with children on litter.

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Councillor Clark noted:

- The community first approach by the Ward Members.
- The work to get Thorpe Street one way.
- That Keppel's Column would be open again in April 2024.

All Keppel Ward Members wished to place on record their thanks to the Neighbourhoods Working Team, in particular Nicola Hacking and Shaun Mirfield, along with all those that attend the monthly Community Action Team meetings.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.

Mover:- Councillor Browne

Seconder:- Councillor Foster

61. NOTICE OF MOTION - NO CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY TO PROTECT ROTHERHAM RESIDENTS FROM FLOODING

It was moved by Councillor A. Carter and seconded by Councillor Miro:

This Council notes:

1. With great regret, the devastating flooding that occurred in Catcliffe and Treeton on 21st October 2023. As a result of the flooding, hundreds of houses were evacuated and extensive damage to property resulted from the ingress of flood waters to domestic properties and local businesses.
2. That looting of residential properties occurred in Catcliffe during the floods in 2007.
3. That in the aftermath of the 2007 Catcliffe floods the Council held a public meeting with residents to discuss the evacuation, flood, and subsequent response and receive feedback from residents.

This Council is concerned:

4. That the Environment Agency did not issue an appropriate warning early enough to reduce the risk to life and enable more motor vehicles and personal possessions to be saved from the flood waters. Water levels were rising for some time before flood defences in Catcliffe were breached.
5. About the difficulty residents in Catcliffe have reported in obtaining home and motor vehicle insurance, and in some instances where residents have obtained a quotation, it has been unaffordable.

6. That South Yorkshire Police were actively enforcing the underused Wood Lane bus gate when alternative main routes in Catcliffe and Brinsworth were impassable, when looting of evacuated residential properties was a high risk.
7. That South Yorkshire Police have not changed their policy on enforcement of the Wood Lane bus gate when they attempted to prioritise enforcement of this during the 2019 flooding crisis that affected residents in the Borough.

This Council therefore resolves:

1. That it has no confidence in the ability of the Environment Agency to provide an adequate response to future flooding in Catcliffe and Treeton to keep residents, homes, and businesses safe.
2. That the Chief Executive and Council Group Leaders are requested to write to:
 - a. The Environment Agency requesting:
 - i. A detailed explanation and a commitment to hold an enquiry to determine why a suitable warning was not issued to residents earlier when it was clear that flood waters would imminently breach the flood defences in Catcliffe.
 - ii. Significant investment in and improvement of the flood defences of the River Rother at Catcliffe.
 - iii. A detailed explanation and a commitment given to residents why active flood management of the River Rother up and down-stream of Catcliffe and Treeton did not appear to take place in the October 2023 flood.
 - b. The Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police and Police and Crime Commissioner:
 - i. Expressing regret that the Force focussed on enforcing the bus gate on Wood Lane at a time when alternative main routes in Catcliffe and Brinsworth were impassable and looting of residential properties was a high risk.
 - ii. Requesting a commitment to residents that they will not enforce the Wood Lane bus gate when flooding is affecting main routes into and out of Catcliffe, Treeton, and Brinsworth; and ensure that commanding officers are made aware of this commitment.
 - c. The Government requesting funding to as a minimum implement the Council's Six Priority Flood Alleviation Schemes throughout the borough, and specific additional funding to invest in further improvements to better protect Catcliffe and Treeton.

3. That the Council's spokesperson on the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel is requested to raise the issues outlined in 2.b.i. and 2.b.ii. directly with the Police and Crime Commissioner and South Yorkshire Police leadership at the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel.
4. That the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considers a further review into flood defences in the Borough, with a particular focus on those areas where flood defences were breached in the October 2023 floods.
5. That the Council's Cabinet is asked to consider additional capital funding to improve flood defences in Catcliffe and to consider funding projects that will better make homes in Catcliffe and Treeton safer from flooding.
6. That the Council holds a public meeting in a suitable local venue within the next 3 months with residents of Catcliffe and Treeton to hear their feedback about the flooding, evacuation, and subsequent response along similar lines as in 2007; with senior Council Officers, Cabinet Members, Councillors, South Yorkshire Police, and the Environment Agency requested to be in attendance.

During the meeting, it was confirmed that a Section 19 audit was underway in relation to the flooding in Treeton and Catcliffe. A Section 19 investigation was a statutory requirement for Lead Local Flood Authorities required under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. It aimed to give an explanation of what happened during the flood event and would give recommendations on what lessons could be learned from the event. As such, the Leader stated that it would be more beneficial to residents to hold the meeting once that report had been published. This was agreed by the proposer of the motion.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried unanimously.

62. NOTICE OF MOTION - DROPPINGWELL TIP (ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING)

It was moved by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Elliott:

That this Council notes that:

1. Since 2016 there have been many complaints to the Environment Agency around the re-permitting of the Grange landfill site at Droppingwell. Despite the valiant efforts of the Droppingwell Action Group and the Council, the works carry on, without the proper level of scrutiny and regulation of the Environment Agency. This has led to direct complaints to the EA that we believe have not been properly investigated.

The Council believes that:

1. As part of the environmental monitoring of the site, the operator was required to install various monitoring systems. One of these systems was a network of ground water bore holes, that under the European Landfill Directives, is required to update the condition of the permit. The operator, without any prior knowledge or permission, proceeded to drill a bore hole (BH5) on Council property. Subsequently, on 2 occasions the borehole was damaged to restore the access track to a useable condition after unpermitted use by a contractor. At no point was anyone made aware of the existence of BH5 and at no point has any formal permission been sought to site the hole on Council land. The test results from BH5 were questioned after test samples were allocated to BH5, even when the hole was not in existence. The investigation by the EA claimed that “the hole had been vandalised.” This claim was totally incorrect, at the point of investigation, only a very small number of people knew of the borehole’s existence and certainly did not know of its location.
2. In correspondence with senior officers at the Council, the EA have claimed that the siting of BH5 is a matter for the operator to address with RMBC. They also carried onto say that the reinstatement of BH5 was “preferable but not required “as part of the pre-conditions for the sites re-opening. Every 6 months the EA must carry out a compliance report, this report matches the site’s operation with the conditions of the license. Over the last 2 years while expressing to the Council that the reinstatement was not a “requirement”, the CAR report to the operator has expressed the EA’s concern that the borehole had not been reinstated and reminded the operator that “until the requirement to re-instate BH5 was undertaken, no waste could be accepted onto site”.
3. We believe that the communications from the EA to RMBC have been very disingenuous, to try to downplay the requirement for BH5’s re-instatement. We also believe that should the borehole now be re-instated, with its location now public and readily accessible, the possibility of it being in a serviceable condition for any length of time, is highly unlikely. The monitoring of the borehole would also require repeated access on a monthly basis to land that we have now gated off to stop illegal trespass; this would then risk a claim of access in law by the operator, who is already trying to claim a right of access over our land.

Therefore this Council resolves that:

1. Permission to re-instate the borehole on Council land be refused and that any access to the land be denied.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19(2), a recorded vote was requested and taken for this item as follows:

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For: Councillors Bacon, Ball, Bennett-Sylvester, Burnett, A. Carter, C. Carter, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Elliott, Fisher, Hunter, Jones, Mills, Miro, Reynolds, Tarmey, Tinsley and Wilson.

Against: Councillors Alam, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Aveyard, Baker-Rodgers, Beck, Bird, Browne, Clark, Cooksey, Cowen, Cusworth, Ellis, Foster, Griffin, Haleem, Harper, Hoddinott, Hughes, Keenan, Lelliott, McNeely, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Sheppard, Taylor, Thompson, Wyatt and Yaseen.

There were 18 votes for and 31 votes against. The motion therefore fell.

63. NOTICE OF MOTION - ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

This motion was withdrawn by Councillor Ball.

64. NOTICE OF MOTION - SCHOOL ROAD SAFETY AND STREET MOTION

It was moved by Councillor Tinsley and seconded by Councillor Fisher:

That this Council note that:

1. Approximately 1200 school children are injured each month in traffic related collisions within a 500m radius of schools. (According to ROSPA) School Crossing Patrol Operatives play a vital role in ensuring children's safety on route to school. However, the last major change in road safety around schools in the Rotherham Borough was back in 2009, which resulted in the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders to enforce School Crossings and advisory 20mph speed limit signs that were fitted near schools more recently.
2. "School street" schemes, have proven successful in multiple UK authorities, closing roads during drop-off and pick-up times to enhance pupil safety, promote active travel, and improve air quality.
3. The Council currently work with the Road Safety Partnership to educate school children and adults around road dangers and behaviours.

That we believe that:

1. School Crossing Patrol operatives face instances where cars fail to stop. We believe that the Council is seemingly not recording these instances along with prosecuting vehicle owners.
2. Cars regularly park on School Keep Clear Lines (zig zag) and contraventions are hard to enforce.
3. Cars parking on pavements near schools, impede the view of

pedestrians making it hazardous for children and adults to cross safely.

4. School Street initiatives establish a vehicle free zone near school entrances or gates during school drop-off and pick-up times. By regulating vehicle access on specific school streets, these initiatives facilitate safe crossings in front of school entrances/gates. These schemes also help to promote walking or cycling to school for both parents and school children, contributing to a decrease in air pollution around schools.

That therefore this Council resolves to:

1. Enhance and improve the process and reporting of near miss incidents for Crossing Patrol Operatives. Provide body worn cameras to aid documenting and prosecuting non-compliance of stop signs.
2. Explore technologies that can aid in enforcing School Crossings (Zig Zag Lines) Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Analyse and put into action appropriate parking and road markings around school entrances to guarantee an unobstructed, safe view for pedestrians crossing.
3. Commit to work with schools and Ward Councillors within our Authority that would benefit from a school street and compile a list of schools where school street trials could be launched as soon as practically possible, once the Council has the relevant powers to enforce them, fast tracking where experimental Traffic Orders could be used.
4. Continue to work with all schools in the Rotherham Borough to develop accredited Travel Plans, which will include enforceable No-Idling Zones and "school streets" schemes. Providing a Member session to inform Members of the support available to Schools.

An amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor Cusworth and seconded by Councillor Wyatt that requested that the Improving Places Select Commission be asked to consider the recommendations as set out in the Notice of Motion. This amendment was accepted by the proposer of the Motion and as such, there was no vote on the amendment.

The substantive motion now read:-

That this Council note that:

1. Approximately 1200 school children are injured each month in traffic related collisions within a 500m radius of schools. (According to ROSPA) School Crossing Patrol Operatives play a vital role in ensuring children's safety on route to school. However, the last major change in road safety around schools in the Rotherham Borough was

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back in 2009, which resulted in the introduction of Traffic Regulation Orders to enforce School Crossings and advisory 20mph speed limit signs that were fitted near schools more recently.

2. "School street" schemes, have proven successful in multiple UK authorities, closing roads during drop-off and pick-up times to enhance pupil safety, promote active travel, and improve air quality.
3. The Council currently work with the Road Safety Partnership to educate School Children and Adults around road dangers and behaviours.

That we believe that:

1. School Crossing Patrol operatives face instances where cars fail to stop. We believe that the Council is seemingly not recording these instances along with prosecuting vehicle owners.
2. Cars regularly park on School Keep Clear Lines (zig zag) and contraventions are hard to enforce.
3. Cars parking on pavements near schools, impede the view of pedestrians making it hazardous for children and adults to cross safely.
4. School Street initiatives establish a vehicle free zone near school entrances or gates during school drop-off and pick-up times. By regulating vehicle access on specific school streets, these initiatives facilitate safe crossings in front of school entrances/gates. These schemes also help to promote walking or cycling to school for both parents and school children, contributing to a decrease in air pollution around Schools.

That therefore this Council resolves to:

Ask the Improving Places Select Commission to consider making recommendations in relation to:

1. Enhance and improve the process and reporting of near miss incidents for Crossing Patrol Operatives. Provide body worn cameras to aid documenting and prosecuting non-compliance of stop signs.
2. Explore technologies that can aid in enforcing School Crossings (Zig Zag Lines) Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Analyse and put into action appropriate parking and road markings around school entrances to guarantee an unobstructed, safe view for pedestrians crossing.
3. Commit to work with schools and Ward Councillors within our Authority that would benefit from a school street and compile a list of

schools where school street trials could be launched as soon as practically possible, once the Council has the relevant powers to enforce them, fast tracking where experimental Traffic Orders could be used.

4. Continue to work with all schools in the Rotherham Borough to develop accredited Travel Plans, which will include enforceable No-Idling Zones and “school streets” schemes. Providing a Members’ session to inform Members of the support available to Schools.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

65. AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers Second: Councillor Browne

66. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Cusworth Second: Councillor Foster

67. LICENSING BOARD, LICENSING BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Ellis Second: Councillor Hughes

68. PLANNING BOARD

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

Mover: Councillor Atkin Second: Councillor Bird

69. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

Mover: Councillor Browne Second: Councillor Wilson

70. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were no questions to consider.

71. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

Question 1 – Councillor Wilson:

Could you please provide an estimate of how many jobs are expected to be created as part of the development of the whole Forge Island complex?

Councillor Lelliott responded:

The construction of Forge Island has involved 641 people working on site since work started in October 2022. On average, there are 140 people working on site on a day-to-day basis. When the destination is opened in Summer next year, based on the square meterage of the facilities, we estimate that a further 100 direct jobs will be created through the operation of the new complex.

Supplementary:

Following the recent decline of the Wilko's corporation (which had a large depot and head office in Bassetlaw and Worksop, close to Anston and Woodsetts), Councillor Wilson sought assurances that residents in her Ward and the wider Rother Valley area would be able to apply for those jobs?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed that the employment opportunities applied across the Borough.

Question 2 – Councillor Wilson:

What strategy are you intending to apply to parking at the Forge Island complex, for example should there be an expectation that visitors will be charged to park at the complex?

Councillor Lelliott responded:

The Strategy for parking at Forge Island offers free parking for hotel customers between the hours of 4.00 p.m. and 10.0 a.m. In addition, those customers using the cinema will be offered concessionary free parking for a period of up to 3.5 hours. Outside of these concessions car park users will be expected to pay, and while yet to be agreed, the tariffs are expected to be at least in line with the Council's current core town centre car park tariff.

Supplementary:

Councillor Wilson stated that she still had concerns regarding the timings and asked if she could pick the matter up with Councillor Lelliott outside of the meeting?

Councillor Lelliott agreed to this request.

Question 3 – Councillor A. Carter:

Can the Cabinet Member explain why the skips that were provided following the recent flooding in Catcliffe and Treeton were left full over the weekend of 28th/29th October, rather than replenished?

Councillor Allen firstly gave her sympathies to all those impacted by the recent flooding.

Councillor Allen responded:

I understand that the skips you refer to were not full at the beginning of that weekend but did fill up over the course of the weekend and were replenished as soon as the supplier was able to do so on the Monday.

Supplementary:

Councillor A. Carter stated that the skips were full by 10.00 a.m. on the Saturday and were not replenished quickly enough. He stated that this should have been foreseen. Councillor A. Carter also confirmed that some residents felt that, in comparison to 2007, staff were not as proactive in trying to help them move destroyed property into skips.

Councillor Allen stated that she took on board the first comments made. However, she did provide reassurance that Council officers were the first people on the scene on 20th October and they were the ones that alerted the emergency services and the Environment Agency to the risk of the rising levels.

The clean-up operation was significant and remained ongoing. There had been 40 Council staff members on site in the immediate aftermath who helped move items into skips. At the peak of the operation there were 36 skips on site which were being replenished as quickly as possible. The Council pulled together the rest centre and support services that went into the area. There were still staff on site, working on the recovery effort. Councillor Allen praised the fantastic work that they had done.

Question 4 – Councillor A. Carter:

With regards to the recent flooding in Catcliffe and Treeton, when and where did the Council first raise concerns to the Environment Agency about the risk of flooding?

Councillor Sheppard responded:

The Council continues to work with all responsible bodies regarding the risk of flooding across the Borough. The River Rother is managed by the Environment Agency as it is a main river. The risks are managed by them through flood defences, controls and notifications. The Council with other partners would ordinarily expect the Environment Agency to provide flood alerts and warnings to inform of the risk of flooding not vice versa.

In relation to this specific incident, communication with relevant partners

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such as the Environment Agency, Police and the Fire Service, had been ongoing from the day prior to the significant rainfall, through the Local Resilience Forum. Council Sheppard and officers had been scheduled to attend a regional conference in York but did not attend so that they could assist in preparations.

Teams had been responding to incidents across the Borough throughout the afternoon and night of the 20th October and liaising with the Environment Agency to understand the latest forecasts on when river levels may peak and to what extent.

It was around 2.00 a.m. in the morning of the 21st when the Council began alerting all relevant partners to the likely need to evacuate a number of residents due to the imminent risk of flooding. A member of staff on site had raised the alarm at this point.

There is a formal review process currently underway that will be publicly reported when it is completed.

Supplementary:

Councillor A. Carter stated that it was very concerning that a Council Officer was having to tell the Environment Agency that there was water coming over the Environment Agency's flood defences at 2.00 a.m. He stated that this was disgraceful. He asked Councillor Sheppard what concerns were raised prior to 2.00 a.m. and what were the details of the conversation that happened between the Council and the Environment Agency at 2.00 a.m.?

Councillor Sheppard confirmed that the response was Borough-wide and the focus was on making sure all resources were deployed. During the event it was simply a case of reacting to the circumstances. The report would look into what data was available and at what time. Details of the call with the Environment Agency would be brought out during the investigation.

Question 5 – Councillor Bacon:

Will the Council leadership commit now that Green Belt land around Todwick, as well as its wildlife sites, will retain these protected statuses, and they will not be developed on, now or in the future?

Councillor Lelliott responded:

The land around Todwick is allocated as Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan. It has the same status as all other Green Belt land in the Borough, and both national and local planning policy protects such land from development. Large areas of land around Todwick are also designated Local Wildlife Sites, giving an additional layer of protection.

The Council has no plans to review the Green Belt boundary in this location.

I must warn the Chamber though that there is one thing that would prevent the Council from controlling development outside Todwick, and that would be to abandon the Local Plan that we agreed for our Borough. I note that the Conservatives have been campaigning on this – indeed the MP for Rother Valley said only last week that he opposed any development on any green field site at all. I must tell Members that if we followed the policy of the Conservative Group, without an adopted Local Plan and a 5 year land supply, we simply would not be able to defend Green Belt sites including those that Councillor Bacon refers to, from development proposals and that would be a real concern I am sure for the people of Todwick.

Supplementary:

Councillor Bacon asked Councillor Lelliott to confirm that the Green Belt land around Todwick, as well as the wildlife sites, would not be development now or when the Local Plan was reviewed?

Councillor Lelliott stated that Rotherham Council was one of the first in South Yorkshire to put a Local Plan in place and that adopted Plan protects the Green Belt. Without a Local Plan, developers could build wherever they wanted. If a developer puts in an application that is not in the Local Plan, the Council can refuse the application. Developers could appeal to the Secretary of State.

If the National Planning Policy Framework was reviewed and the requirement for a Local Plan removed, which had been suggested by the Conservative Government, it would remove any protection that Rotherham Council had put in place to protect the matters raised by Councillor Bacon.

Question 6 – Councillor A. Carter:

What measures has the Council undertaken in the past to ensure that all Council tenants are aware of the ability to get contents insurance through the Council?

Councillor Allen responded:

The Council includes contents insurance policy booklets within the sign-up pack for all new tenants. They also receive the specific details upon signing their tenancy agreement and obtaining keys.

Promotional fliers and application forms are provided at events, such as Financial Inclusion drop-in session and the Rotherham Show. Further recent promotion was delivered through the Rotherham Advertiser in the Council's 'Money Matters' articles.

As part of the tenancy health check process, residents are asked if they hold contents insurance. If not, the Council's scheme is promoted and encouraged.

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Supplementary:

Councillor A. Carter stated that his question was in relation to those at risk of flooding or who had been flooded. Was there any information on whether any Council tenant who lives in a flooded area or has been impacted by flooding who have not had appropriate contents insurance? Could the Council commit to ensuring those residents who have been flooded recently or in the past receive reminders about the contents insurance?

Councillor Allen confirmed this would be actioned outside of the meeting.

Question 7 – Councillor A. Carter:

With regards to claims through the Council's contents insurance, can the Cabinet Member confirm that those properties affected by recent flooding have been receiving reimbursement for the full 'as new' price of their lost contents, rather than a value in keeping with 'used' or 'second hand' condition?

Councillor Allen responded:

In line with the policy documentation, all home contents are covered on a 'new for old' basis except for linen and clothing, which are replaced at current cost less an amount for wear and tear.

Supplementary:

Councillor A. Carter asked for clarification on whether the price "as new" related to when the items were initially bought or the price if they were to be bought today?

Councillor Allen confirmed that it was her understanding that "as new" meant the price as it was currently but she would confirm that with officers.

Question 8 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

At the Improving Places Select Commission on 24th October we had for scrutiny the Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy. Am I correct that a positive lifestyle choice was not one of the key factors the Rough Sleepers Team have to deal with?

A response would be provided in writing by the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 9 – Councillor A. Carter:

What provisions have the Council made to ensure that families with school children who are in temporary accommodation following the October 2023 floods are not financially impacted by longer commutes to school?

Councillor Cusworth responded:

As part of the response to the flood event, children from families who live

in the affected housing were identified and, where requested, the Council put in place home to school transport arrangements as an interim measure until such time the families could apply for continued transport support in the form of a Zoom Zero Fare Bus Pass.

This entitles the holder to travel for a subsidised cost of £1 per journey and would be granted where the eligibility criteria has been met, which includes consideration around walking distances to school and family income. Where an eligible child would not be able to travel alone on public transport, other options to fulfil the Councils statutory obligations would be considered.

Officers stand ready to assist if there are other residents in this position and in need of support.

Supplementary:

Councillor A. Carter stated that £1 per journey would result in a £10 a week tax per child because they had been forced to move due to flooding. He asked if that was correct because he did not think that should be the case? Was there any reimbursement scheme for those that did not use public transport and travelled by car instead?

Councillor Cusworth stated that a written response would be provided.

Question 10 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Currently there are several Committee vacancies where political groupings have not taken their seats. Is there anyway on the website that attendance figures can be given for political groups to include meetings missed due to not taking available seats?

A response would be provided in writing by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 11 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Thank you for your answer at the last Improving Places Select Commission as to why rail services through Rotherham Central were disrupted. Do future measures ensure that the electrical equipment at Parkgate will be protected or do other measures need to be considered?

A response would be provided in writing by the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 12 – Councillor Hunter:

In the last 12 months, how much revenue have RMBC made from car parking charges in the town?

Councillor Lelliott responded:

The Council have received around £550k income to date this year from

car parking in the Town Centre, so since April 2023.

Supplementary:

Councillor Hunter stated that these charges were seen by some to be quite high. Given more people needed to be coming into the town centre due to the investments in the Market and Forge Island Development, could the Council commit to looking at inclusive and more affordable parking solution?

Councillor Lelliott confirmed that nothing would be ruled out but the parking charges were already quite low compared to other areas with it costing £1.50 for up to 2 hours; £2.00 for up to 4 hours and £3.50 for up to 10 hours. There were some free parking offers and there would be some free parking associated with the Forge Island development. There was also a local and national trend that people did not mind paying extra for on-street parking to allow them to be closer to amenities. However, charges were constantly being reviewed.

Question 13 – Councillor Tarmey:

Residents of North Anston and Dinnington regularly sit in a 1.3km traffic jam on the B6463 every morning and evening to reach the A57 on the B6463 heading towards Todwick roundabout. Given that housing developments have been granted planning permission in Dinnington recently what improvements are planned to the road network to reduce congestion locally?

Councillor Read responded:

I am aware of the congestion and queuing traffic at this location. We are seeing this in many locations as traffic and commuting increase again following the Covid and immediate post-covid patterns. In addition the roadworks on the M1, coupled with Sat Nav systems, may be playing a part at this location; probably more so than the new developments.

The development in the area is not yet fully occupied with around 150 houses currently occupied. This is therefore unlikely to be having a major impact.

The Council has approximately £250,000 secured for sustainable measures secured by S106 agreements for the 3 developments. However this is likely to be spent on much more local journeys. As such, there were no immediate proposals.

Supplementary:

Councillor Tarmey stated the issue had been ongoing for several years so he doubted the roadworks on the M1 were an issue. He asked whether the lane markings on the roundabout could be having an impact?

Councillor Read confirmed that a written response would be provided.

Question 14 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Can you please explain the rationale for your taking on the duties of the former Cabinet Member for Transport and the Environment rather than making a new appointment?

A response would be provided in writing by the Leader as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 15 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

Reportedly, due to persistent diesel thefts at the Streetpride Rawmarsh Depot, there has been significant disruption to services. Can you please report on the accuracy of this and measures taken to limit disruption?

A response would be provided in writing by the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 16 – Councillor Tarmey:

Following the Kiveton Park fire we highlighted the need for better communication between Council Officers, Elected Members and residents in emergency situations. Does the Cabinet Member share my concern that lessons have not been learned by Council Officers in improving communication with Elected Members and residents when managing emergency situations as they arise in the case of recent flooding?

Councillor Sheppard responded:

After any significant incident the Council and partners seek to learn lessons and improve future responses.

I do think lessons have been learnt as some specific actions were taken to improve the response. In this instance, one of the key differences was the acute threat posed by the flood water, so the immediate focus of the Council at the initial point of impact was fulfilling its legal and moral obligation to warn and inform those in danger. Since then, the Council has proactively engaged Elected Members and provided a number of updates with our communications efforts being significant and rightly targeted at those impacted the most.

The volume of correspondence and engagement in the worst affected area in Catcliffe over the last few weeks has been unprecedented in my experience, with regular emails, door knocks and direct mail letters, in addition to staff on site.

I do, however, hear your concerns and I would want to reassure you and other Members that a debrief process is underway and you will all receive an invite to participate and make your views known to officers so they can continue to improve in future.

Supplementary:

Councillor Tarmey asked Councillor Sheppard to commit, in future

situations, to informing Ward Members and Parish Councils in those areas within one hour of the emergency occurring?

Councillor Sheppard stated that there may be more pressing emergencies to deal with in the hour immediately after an emergency occurring which would require other agencies to be contacted first. He did assure Councillor Tarmey that Ward Members would be notified as soon as reasonably practicable.

Question 17 – Councillor Tarmey:

The number of motor vehicle accidents in Anston (including one last week) near the junction of the B6463 (Todwick Road) and Common Road has increased in recent years. This may be linked to increased traffic on the B6463, can the Cabinet Member assure me that this will be investigated and any possible improvements implemented?

Councillor Read responded:

Every year our Road Safety Team analyse all the Personal Injury Collisions in the Borough, and the key aim is to identify locations with accident patterns and evaluate the potential for cost-effective interventions, so that we can use the funding that we have available to make our roads as safe as possible.

I understand the concerns raised about the Anston junction because, according to our data, there have been 6 accidents near this junction in the past 3 years, of which 2 were classified as serious and 4 were slight.

We are of course committed to keeping a record of these areas of concern. As funding opportunities arise or circumstances change, we will re-evaluate and consider measures to improve safety at the Anston junction and continue to monitor the patterns of accidents, not just here, but across Borough as a whole.

Question 18 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

The A630 in Dalton is recognised as an area of traffic congestion. As well as the failed scheme to ease congestion off the Mushroom Roundabout what investigations or proposals have there been to ease congestion from Magna Lane, Oldgate Lane and Doncaster Road towards Rotherham?

A response would be provided in writing by the Leader as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 19 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

With reference to the written answer on p73 of today's agenda and being more specific, are bags of domestic rubbish left by litter bins included in the figures reported by the waste management service to the Improving Places Select Commission on 7th February for small fly tips?

A response would be provided in writing by the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not

present to ask this question.

Question 20 – Councillor Miro:

Does the Cabinet Member believe that the Council Tax support offered to residents affected by the recent flooding goes far enough?

Councillor Alam responded:

The Council recognises the challenging time that those households impacted by the 21st October flooding are facing and quickly established a package of support to help those residents. This includes cash support as well Council Tax relief, and I should say that we have considerably extended the Government's offer in terms of Council Tax support. As a result, Rotherham residents will receive nearly twice as much support as residents elsewhere in the country with no bills until at least the beginning of April 2024.

Moreover, beyond this, the Council has discretionary arrangements in place so that where residents are still not able to return home and are encountering hardship because they are liable for 2 sets of Council Tax bills, they can be considered for further support from April onwards.

Question 21 – Councillor Miro:

Following the recent flooding in Catcliffe and Treeton, main roads through Catcliffe were left closed for several days after the floodwater and debris had been cleared. Why were the reasons for this not immediately communicated to residents?

Councillor Sheppard responded:

In relation to this specific incident the Council and the Environment Agency installed temporary pumping equipment to draw down flood water. These pumps were positioned on Orgreave Road and the Council continued to monitor weather forecasts and the river levels. Throughout the event the Council communicated with the local community to confirm on-site activity, provide assistance linked to the road closures, including a temporary bus service and updates on road closures through social media and the Council Webpage. Messages were shared through Council staff based at the Memorial Hall and the Council conducted door knocking in the areas affected, as well as providing regular newsletters to residents and information via the media.

When the temporary pumps were removed from site and the road network cleansed and made safe, the road was opened for road users.

The signalised road junction on Poplar Way was affected by the flood water and temporary give way signage is currently being employed.

Supplementary:

Councillor Miro stated the traffic lights at the bottom of Highfield Lane were not working and had not been working since the flood. He asked the Cabinet Member when this would be fixed?

Councillor Sheppard would provide a written response.

Question 22 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

It is welcome that the PSPO has been renewed for Rotherham Town Centre. As well as reported ASB data, were any metrics gained on public perception of the town centre as a safe place to visit as part of the renewal process?

A response would be provided in writing by the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 23 – Councillor Bennett-Sylvester:

We have spent a lot of money on new pavements in the town centre. How often are they getting swept, especially with regards to leaf debris at the moment?

A response would be provided in writing by the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Environment as Councillor Bennett-Sylvester was not present to ask this question.

Question 24 – Councillor Miro:

Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the Environment Agency's response to the recent flooding in Catcliffe and Treeton has been inadequate?

Councillor Sheppard responded:

I think we have covered this earlier in today's agenda and as mentioned, there is a Section 19 audit currently being compiled. To reiterate what was said, it is entirely understandable that people will feel let down by the Environment Agency. I think we should also reflect on the consequences of 60% budget cuts to that organisation and the loss of thousands of jobs as a result. That was not just on flood defence schemes being built out but also on maintenance of existing schemes. The Environment Agency target was to have 98% of their current infrastructure operational but they were struggling to reach 94/95% at the moment which was a big worry. They needed the funding and resources.

Question 25 – Councillor Miro:

Can the Cabinet Member please confirm what additional support has been made available to specifically support children and young people affected by the recent flooding in Catcliffe and Treeton?

Councillor Cusworth responded:

I am very proud of the support that has been put in for children and young people following the recent flooding.

Children and Young People's Services were part of an extensive data matching exercise which took place to ascertain households with children

to offer support.

Early Help family support and outreach and engagement were part of the co-ordinated response to the floods, with representatives at the rest centre in Catcliffe working throughout the weekend to support those impacted. Staff ensured families accessed support and provided essential items along with other Council Members.

Children's Social Care Out of Hours Service was available as usual throughout the weekend of the floods.

The Universal Youth Offer and Outreach and Engagement offer continues to support children and young people on a locality basis.

Children and Young People's Services are part of recovery meetings to ensure a consistent and appropriate response to all those impacted.

The Locality Manager for the area and associated staff are well connected with agencies and the community and provide support as need arises. They have a close working relationship with the schools in the area and ensure that we keep up-to-date with local need by liaising with schools.

Question 26 – Councillor Miro:

What measures has the Council taken to ensure that properties flooded in Catcliffe and Treeton will not have to pay higher energy bills this year because of having to dry out their properties?

Councillor Sheppard responded:

The Council recognises the challenging time that those households impacted by the 21st October flooding are facing and has quickly established a package of support to help those residents. This includes cash support as well Council Tax relief.

Residents are also supported by Government's grant and Council Tax relief scheme for flooded properties.

The Council has not specifically targeted funds towards a specific purpose or been restrictive in how the cash grants can be used so that households can utilise this support in a way that best suits their position.

However, since Monday, 23rd October, organisations such as Voluntary Action Rotherham, Citizens Advice and Rotherfed have been available at Catcliffe Memorial Hall to offer advice and support to residents who have been impacted by the floods. This has included advice and guidance around energy bills.

Question 27 – Councillor Miro:

What impact does the Council believe the new housing developments in Catcliffe and Waverley has had on the flooding risk to properties?

Councillor Sheppard responded:

Again, I would wish to express my deepest sympathies to all those affected by the recent flooding events which have such a long lasting impact on all those unfortunate enough to be caught up in them.

I can confirm though that surface water drainage and flood risk strategies were considered as part of the planning application process for the developments at Waverley and Catcliffe to ensure that all surface water is managed in such a way so that it does not increase the risk of flooding to the surrounding area. The level of water discharged from these sites into the River Rother is controlled and ensures that the amount of water that discharges into the river is the same as would naturally flow from the site if the development was not there.

During flood conditions the outfall is physically cut off and water is held in the lakes which have been designed to provide additional flood water storage which was evident from the drone footage that was captured during these tragic events. The view from our Drainage Team is that the lakes actually reduced the amount of flooding that was experienced rather than contribute to it.

Question 28 – Councillor Miro:

If flood-affected families choose to permanently relocate to another area in the Borough, how does the Council plan to ensure any school children will be given top priority for being admitted to a more local school?

Councillor Cusworth responded:

Any families choosing to relocate within Borough will be supported through the usual admissions process. Priority must be given in line with the determined and published admissions arrangements. Where it is not possible for an applicant to secure a place at a preferred school through usual admission process then RMBC's Fair Access Protocol will be employed to ensure that an offer of a place a school within a reasonable distance can be made to any child requiring one.

72. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.