

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 24 July 2024

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Baggaley, Blackham, Keenan, Marshall, McKiernan, Tinsley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Pitchley.

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

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

9. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5 JUNE 2024

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 05 June 2024 be approved as a true record.

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

The Chair invited members of the public to ask questions and reminded attendees that the agenda item would last for fifteen minutes, each member of the public was entitled to ask one question and one supplementary and questions had to relate to items on the agenda.

A question was asked relating to the request to raise the Palestinian flag, during a period of Purdah. The Chair advised that the general election had delayed the relevant petition from being presented to OSMB due to Purdah. The Monitoring Officer advised that the advice provided was that the matter was under consideration by Scrutiny and would be presented to OSMB. This decision was precluded by purdah and the Chief Executive would not pre-empted the decision of OSMB, therefore it would be the responsibility of Scrutiny to approve or decline the flag request and the Chief Executive would not override the governance process.

A supplementary question was asked in relation to the IHRA definition adopted on 4th September 2019 and the request for the definition to be replaced by the relevant sections of the Equality Act 2019. The Chair advised that the report on the Petition "Rotherham's Commitment to a Permanent Ceasefire and To Promote Peace in Palestine and in the Region" would be discussed during agenda item 6 and the recommendations would either be approved or declined. A response would then be presented to Cabinet for consideration and a full report would be provided back to OSMB from Cabinet. The Chair advised that the timescale for the process would be eight weeks. The Chair of OSMB Sub-Group had written to the Leader of the Council detailing the

recommendations set out within the report at present.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Agenda Item No. 9 (Minute No.16) Dinnington Projects Levelling Up Fund Update Report- Appendix 2,3,4 and 5, was exempt from the press and public:-

That under Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 (information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual/financial information).

Resolved:-That members of the press and public be excluded for this item.

13. REFERRAL FROM COUNCIL TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (OSMB) - PETITION "ROTHERHAM'S COMMITMENT TO A PERMANENT CEASEFIRE AND TO PROMOTE PEACE IN PALESTINE AND IN THE REGION".

The Chair invited Councillor Yasseen to introduce the report who provided the relevant context and background. Councillor Yasseen advised that during the meeting of Full Council on 28 February 2024, it was agreed that OSMB would be asked to consider the requests set out in the petition. It was advised that the development of the OSMB Sub-Group ensured the integrity and detailed consideration of each recommendation listed within the petition and created a space for the Council to work with lead petitioners and foster transparent discussions.

Councillor Yasseen acknowledged the hard work and contributions of the lead petitioners and residents in supporting the petition. Thanks were put on record to the Chair of OSMB at the relevant point in time, former Councillor Maggie Clark, Former Councillor Wendy Cooksey, Councillor Baker-Rogers and Councillor Yasseen. It was acknowledged that everyone involved in the OSMB Sub- Group attended several meetings to reach the outcomes detailed within the report and there had been a focus on ensuring that the outcomes would be deliverable.

Councillor Yasseen felt that the petition was linked to history and presenting the petition reaffirmed Councillors commitment to be morally accountable. It was advised that over 4,000 residents signed the ceasefire petition, to request that Councillors as local representatives would respond to the atrocities in Palestine. Councillor Yasseen stated that over 40,000 people had died, innocent Palestinians had been murdered, babies had been born into war and deprived of life and it was a place where the dying were denied dignity and comfort. Councillor Yasseen felt

that the role of Councillors was to protect and represent all, regardless of nationality, ensuring a moral obligation to speak out against injustice and advocate for peace for all residents in the borough. It was advised that the petition would not end at this meeting and the report would be a living document which would reflect the ongoing court rulings. An example was provided of a court ruling from the International Court of Justice, which related to a request set out within the petition regarding illegal settlements.

The Chair thanked Councillor Yasseen for presenting the report and agreed that this was a very serious on-going issue in Palestine. The Chair advised that he understood the frustrations of the residents in Rotherham seeing their families suffering. The Chair advised that the petition would go through the relevant governance process and the Chair would write to the Leader to request that the recommendations be expediated for consideration by Cabinet as soon as possible.

The Chair asked members if they had any questions or comments on the report and the following was discussed and noted:

Councillor Bacon queried recommendation 5, paragraph 1, which was a request to fly the Palestinian flag. Councillor Bacon advised that the reason provided for this recommendation in the report was for a gesture of solidarity for those in Gaza and the wider region who were affected by the conflict and to support peace. Councillor Bacon asked whether any other communities had been consulted on this recommendation, such as the Jewish community and what the reason was for choosing this flag, instead of a neutral flag. Councillor Bacon felt this could potentially inflame tensions and that Members should be mindful of Jewish visitors who may have families among some of the hostages.

Councillor Yasseen advised that the petition which had received the most signatures in the history of any petition presented to the Council, was signed by Rotherham residents and the request was a direct request from over 4,000 Rotherham residents. Councillor Yasseen stated that she could not state the backgrounds of the individuals and could not make assumptions of who signed the petition, but she was aware of the diversity of the community. Councillor Yasseen felt that Rotherham had a long history of responding to awful atrocities around the world, an example was provided of the Christchurch attacks in New Zealand, where the Leader, Chief Executive and Cabinet led a minute's silence for the attacks. A further example was provided of the Council flying the Ukrainian flag, to represent the Councils solidarity for peace in Ukraine and the atrocities committed in Ukraine. Councillor Yasseen felt that the petitions aim was for peace and to show solidarity for a ceasefire for the Palestinian people, therefore there was no neutrality in the petition, which aimed to ensure a parity approach. Councillor Yasseen referred to the Equality Duty and said that she felt that the Council could not only respond to certain atrocities and was required to show parity to all communities. Councillor Yasseen advised that she felt that residents had

to develop the petition and put pressure on the Council to deliver on its equality duty, relating to the parity of treatment to represent Israel after the October atrocities and to the Palestinians situation, which was widely understood nationally and internationally and this was the reason why the request detailed in the petition was to fly the Palestinian flag and not a neutral flag.

Councillor Bacon advised that in relation to his line of questioning he was focusing solely on the report presented to OSMB and not the petition itself. Councillor Bacon advised that the recommendation within the report stated that it was a gesture of solidarity to those in Gaza and the wider region and he felt that the comments made in the meeting indicated that the request in question was solely for the Palestinian people and not the wider region.

Councillor Yasseen responded that it was right to show parity and the Council had raised other countries flags previously, including the other side of the agenda's flag and this aligned with the strong culture in Rotherham. An example was provided of Rotherham Council fighting against Apartheid in the nineteen eighties, supporting South Africa and the wider region. Councillor Yasseen advised that the wording was agreed with the petitioners and all members of OSMB were invited to join the Sub-Group.

The Chair advised that most people living in the Gaza Strip were Palestinian people, therefore it was clear why the Palestinian flag had been chosen for this request.

Councillor Bacon queried recommendation 2, paragraph 2, which noted that the Council no longer had active twinning arrangements, and it was not recommended that these recommence. Councillor Bacon queried whether this recommendation related to twinning in general or whether it related specifically to Israel.

Councillor Yasseen stated that the Council did not currently have any twinning arrangements in place but did have a long history and culture of twinning.

Councillor Yasseen said that she was informed during the OSMB Sub-Group meeting that twinning was no longer a viable option due to financial implications and her understanding from the debate that took place, was that twinning would foster stronger relationships and related to the broader symbolic gesture of stronger relationships and representing the communities that lived in Rotherham.

Councillor Bacon queried again whether the recommendation in the report which stated that twinning was not recommended to recommence, had a specific focus on Israel or whether this was generic to all twinning arrangements.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that when the OSMB Sub-Group considered the recommendations within the report, the recommendation about twinning related to all potential twinning arrangements collectively. The Council did previously have twinning arrangements in place with St Quentin in France and other countries, which were not continued, and the council no longer actively promoted or delivered twinning.

Councillor Bacon advised that the context of the recommendation in question was important and queried that if it was the case that the Council no longer had twinning arrangements because of budgetary issues, why this was listed within this report.

Councillor Yasseen responded that the petition had not been brought to OSMB as local democratic representatives, it had been brought to OSMB by Rotherham residents. Councillor Yasseen stated that twinning did not exist currently, and she felt that the Council should do long term twinning to ensure stronger relationships outside Rotherham and internationally, the recommendation did not relate to one country and the idea was more symbolic and related to national and international history of twinning.

The Assistant Director of Legal, Elections and Registration Service/Monitoring Officer provided context to the background of the recommendation discussed and advised that as part of the petition presented to the OSMB Sub-Group for Councillors considerations, there was a question as to why if the Council was twinning with other areas, it could not for example twin with a Palestinian area. It was advised that there were no twinning agreements active, and the Council was not presently twinning in any context and would not initiate any more twinning arrangements.

Councillor Marshall stated that the flag had been raised previously for many atrocities throughout the world and although she felt that what happened on the 7th of October was atrocious, what was happening to the Palestinian people at present was worse. Councillor Marshall felt that as the flag had not yet been raised, no other flag could be raised and although the report stated that the flag raising should coincide with the United Nations International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people on the 29th of November 2024, she felt that the flag should be raised straight away.

Councillor Carter advised that there were many recommendations within the report that he felt members should support. Councillor Carter focused on recommendation 2.2 and queried whether the Council knew whether it had any contractual obligations with any companies named in the UN Human Rights Councils list or the Israeli Government, he felt this was important to clarify. Councillor Carter also said that he hoped to see the government take a stronger stance on making sure there would be a peaceful two-state solution.

Councillor Keenan said that she fully supported the recommendations within the report, in particular the recommendations that provided a visible sign of support in the borough for Palestine, such as the suggestions of interfaith and cultural sporting events, community art murals and olive trees.

The Chair asked Members to indicate if they wanted to make any amendments to the recommendations listed within the report. Councillor Yasseen requested that additional recommendations be added, which were to request that the Cabinet Spokesperson continue to hold dialogue with petitioners to continue to seek peace in Palestine and the Region and to request that Cabinet consider expediting the governance processes and provide updates to OSMB on progress against the recommendations.

The Chair thanked the lead petitioner for their participation in the petition process.

Resolved:- That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

- 1) Approve the recommendations numbered 1-3 listed within the report, which incorporates the petitions recommendations number 1-7 and forwards them to Cabinet for consideration and decision.
- 2) Request that the Cabinet Spokesperson continues to hold dialogue with Petitioners to continue seek peace in Palestine and the Region.
- 3) Request that Cabinet consider expediting the governance processes and provide updates to OSMB on progress against the recommendations.

14. **COUNCIL PLAN AND YEAR AHEAD DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Chair invited the Leader of the Council to introduce the report and present the update.

The Council Plan was a strategic document published on a four yearly cycle, there was an Annual Delivery Plan that sat underneath the Council Plan which detailed the relevant delivery actions. Updates on the Council Plan were presented to Scrutiny on a six-monthly basis. 78% of the 98 actions detailed in the plan had been completed. 59% of the 68 performance measures were on target. The report was the year-end report for the previous municipal year and the proposals for agreement, for the current municipal year were detailed in the report. Consultation would begin over the summer period, for the next four-year Council Plan.

In relation to the theme Every Neighbourhood Thriving, there had been achievements such as, the completion of a new Pavement Parking Policy and the Council were looking to start engagement with Ward Members on what places they would like to prioritise engagement with the public relating the regulations. In February 2024, a new 20 mile per hour

approach was agreed, to adopt a more coherent approach to 20 mile an hour speed limits. The Taxi Licensing Review was concluded, a new library was built at Thurcroft, and the programme of Capital Investment in CCTV Cameras was completed, although there was further work to be completed relating to the software of the cameras. In relation to delayed activities in this theme, the Local Neighbourhood Road Safety Schemes had ten schemes complete and eighteen in progress. The Towns and Villages Fund Phase One included the first four million pounds to be spent on the schemes, fifteen schemes had been delivered, four were on site at the current time and three were delayed. An example of Brinsworth was provided for one scheme that was delayed due to local issues.

In terms of performance measures in this theme, the anti-social behaviour perception measure was based on a police survey of how residents were feeling about anti-social behaviour, which had missed its target by less than 1%.

In relation to the theme People Safe, Healthy and Live well, there had been achievements such as the delivery of the Say Yes Public Health Campaign which encouraged people to say yes to healthier lifestyles. There had been a refresh of the Learning Disability Strategy and two thousand Rother Care kits for the new assistive technology, had been rolled out in advance of the future move towards digital phone lines. As all Councils were providing equipment for digital phone lines, BT had delayed their deadline for ending analogue phones and introducing digital phones only, therefore the delay was a national challenge. There had been a restructure of the homelessness service which resulted in several staffing changes and an increase in recruitment, to ensure the service would be more proactive and able to assist people before they became homeless, rather than responding to people who were already homeless. There were two delayed actions in this theme, one was Castle View which was a major plan for an in-house day centre with associated housing at Canklow. There had been a change in the plan and delays were a result of the costings of the scheme. The report referenced that a Cabinet decision was required for this action in July due to additional funding that was required. There were a number of housing scheme delays due to challenges at some sites. In relation to performance measures, admissions of elderly people into long-term residential care had a target of 300 and this was 301. Safeguarding enquiries where people felt their needs to be partially met was less than 1% off target. There were also two measurements relating to homelessness that were off target. This was due to an increase in people requiring homelessness support and was part of a wider national homelessness crisis.

In relation to the theme Every Child is Able to Fulfil Their Potential, there was achievements such as the roll out of the Family Hopes Programme, which was a two-year piece of work for Childrens Services and Health Services. The Youth Justice Action Plan and the SEND Written Statement of Action were completed. Improvements were required in both areas over recent years, and it was important that the Council had delivered on those

actions to improve the services. There had been delays in actions relating to children's residential homes, one had been opened, two purchased and one property had been identified but was not yet acquired. Delays in this area were due to identifying the right properties, purchasing the right properties, and completing engagement with local communities throughout planning processes. It was also a challenge to recruit employees for residential homes, an example was provided of how residential managers in particular could be a challenge to recruit. Although this was behind schedule, the Council were committed to delivering these commitments. In relation to performance measures, there was one off target, this was the year one phonics screen check, the data for this measure was out of date, it was based on the academic year rather than the municipal year.

In relation to the theme of Expanding Economic Opportunity, there were achievements such as the UK's Small Grants Programme which supported businesses and business start-ups. The Local Labour Planning Policy was adopted, and several town centre works were underway. In terms of delays, there was an identified delay on actions relating to Riverside Gardens Public Realm Scheme and the Templeborough Towns Fund Scheme. In relation to performance measures, the proportion to people in or looking for work, was based on recent new data and there was concern around the number of Rotherham residents feeling unable to access or look for work. It was advised that there was a high number of people who were economically inactive due to ill health. The numbers were based on Labour Force Survey numbers, which were unreliable, due to it being a small sample. There were four indicators which were pointing in the wrong direction for the last year and more work was required in this area. The performance measure relating to the recruitment of apprentices required further work to increase numbers.

In relation to the theme of a Cleaner, Greener Environment, there were achievements such as, a new IT system in place which would change the way IT was used, ensuring the system would work effectively and residents would get responses to enquiries in a timely manner. The new household recycling centre contract was in place and the Council was in the process of bringing the operations back in house over the next few years. Several transport schemes had also been delivered. There were a number of delays in this theme, such as the procurement of narrow access vehicles, the vehicle was on lease at this point in time and there was no difference in the service provided. Rother Valley and Thrybergh Country Park works were delayed, and the Centenary Way bridge repairs were delayed, to ensure that the repairs would not run alongside other roadworks in the area. The outline business case for the Mainline Station was delayed due to changes from the Government relating to the High Speed Two announcement and the requirement for Network Rail to produce the document for the Council. The new electric vehicle fleet for the Council was delayed due to a delay in officer recruitment to undertake the work. The delivery of the in-house green energy provision was delayed due to the landowner deciding not to go ahead with the project.

The EV Charging Scheme relating to the Drummond Street Car Park was delayed due to guidance from the Government relating to the nature of the schemes, guidance had been issued and work could now continue on the scheme. In relation to performance measures in this theme, there were challenging targets relating to enforcement measures on fly-tipping and other forms of enforcement, the target was not met but improvements in this area had been made. Targets on waste, reuse and recycling were not met, but this measure was 3% higher than the year before. There was a challenge for the Council to ensure people were recycling appropriately and avoiding simple mistakes. Complaints about Street Scene were off target by 2%. There was a delay in the data relating to carbon emissions therefore the report contained the previous year's data. Tree planning was delayed due to changes to the climate. In terms of One Council, all actions were completed. In terms of performance, there were challenges for the Complaints Team around timescales. There was a challenge relating to days lost to sickness and an ageing workforce, in particular within front-line services. These created challenges relating to sickness rates and recruitment levels.

New targets had been developed for the up-coming year which were more challenging than the previous year. An example was provided of highway maintenance, the target outcome was better than expected, therefore the target had been updated accordingly. On page 183 of the agenda pack there were a series of measures developed for the Year Ahead Plan for the up-coming year.

Councillor Marshall queried the number of days lost to sickness and whether there were any indicators towards the cause of the sickness levels and the work being completed to combat the levels.

The Leader responded to advise that the two main causes of sickness were stress related conditions and musculoskeletal conditions. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that in relation to musculoskeletal conditions, the Council were completing more day one referrals where an employee indicated that they are off work due to strains, into the Occupational Health Service to ensure support would be provided at an early stage, to support a return to the workplace. In relation to stress, there were several measures in place such as team risk assessments, the Employee Assistance Programme and a Health and Wellbeing Programme. The Employee Assistance Programme was accessible to all employees for personal or work-related stresses. Managers were provided with support and guidance was provided to assist them to prioritise work in situations where particular teams had higher workloads and stresses resulting from that.

Councillor Tinsley queried the two-year Capital Investment Programme to improve play areas across the Borough, under the theme Every Child is Able to Fulfil Their Potential. He asked where the capital investment was and advised that Maltby had not received any funding from this fund. The Leader advised that the measure covered a range of schemes that were

funded in different ways and the Maltby funding was generated locally. There was £100,000 of capital budget investment corporately that contributed to the works, there were a series of small-scale play equipment replacements, and all works were captured in the measures. The Council's in-house Design Team worked on a basis of covering their own costs through capital works and a fee was provided to the Team out of the scheme costs.

Councillor Yaseen queried the tables referenced on page 59 relating to the theme People are Safe, Healthy and Live Well and advised that the causes of increases in homelessness were not only as a result of people's personal circumstances, but also due to other external factors. An example was provided of the impact that delays in housing schemes could have had on homelessness levels within the Borough. Councillor Yaseen felt that the housing schemes developed did not always meet the greatest pressures, an example was provided of someone fleeing domestic abuse and the lack of housing stock for that profile.

The Leader responded that he agreed with Councillor Yaseen's assessment of the domestic abuse measures and assurance was provided that the service had increased engagement levels, this provided confidence about the support that people would receive if required. The Leader advised that the challenges around homelessness were not related to housing delays. Over the last five years the Council had built more council homes than in any comparable period for several decades. Compared to the scale of the challenge around homelessness, the delays in housing schemes were relatively small numbers. There was a high level of people requiring emergency accommodation for homelessness last year. All housing options were considered when discharging homelessness duties, this included the private rented sector, supported housing and council properties. If the Government helped to restrict the Right to Buy Scheme, this would help the Council to maintain the number of council houses that were available. The Council wrote to the Government to request support for more social housing delivery, this was part of a national drive.

There was a challenge relating to hostels for short term accommodation for the night, there was not this type of this accommodation available within the Borough and the Council relied on hostel accommodation based in Sheffield.

Councillor Yaseen queried pages 68 and 69 which related to the theme a Cleaner, Greener Local Environment and the delays listed in the tables. Councillor Yaseen felt that the Council was not prioritising the climate emergency and provided an example of how the council fleet Carbon emissions target had been lowered from 18% to a 10% target, both of which had not been met and Council carbon emissions had increased by 3.2%.

The Leader responded that the Council had spent money on specialist employees to assist with delivering on the climate emergency. The goals set for reducing carbon emissions were challenging. The Council made a big commitment of providing resources to shift the Councils energy supply and shifting fleet. The recruitment of specialist employees had taken longer than anticipated and once the team was established the numbers on emissions would drop, with the aim of the Council getting as close as possible to the 2030 commitment.

Councillor Yasseen queried the equality and diversity levels of the Councils workforce and the lack of a proportional representation of BAME employees. She asked whether this was being proactively addressed.

The Leader responded that the Council was one of the biggest employers in the Borough, with 75% of Council employees being residents. The real living wage was introduced for Council employees provided funds for Council employees and also the wider local economy.

Councillor Yasseen also queried specific measures in the report, an example was provided of the BAME figures and the use of the 2011 Census data rather than the latest Census data.

The Leader responded that the targets relating to people in BAME communities were developed because of the Council wanting to improve those figures. There was further work to do to ensure residents understood the breadth of careers that the Council offered. Work had been completed to improve this understanding, such as careers fairs and visits to schools across the Borough to engage people before they completed their GCSE's. Further work on BAME recruitment was needed, this would require targeted work to ensure the Council were reaching all individuals.

The Assistant Chief Executive advised that when the Council Plan was written the 2011 Census data was the only Census data available at that point in time. The latest Census data had been captured during the life of the current Council Plan and was captured within the report, forming part of the new targets for the new Council Plan. The Council were not representative fully of the communities that they served, and work was on-going to increase this via the Workforce Plan. A Senior Community Engagement Officer position had been developed within the Organisational Development Team and would focus on this work. The Service were engaging with community centres such as the Clifton Learning Centre, colleges, and schools to understand the barriers that may exist in recruitment processes.

Councillor Bacon queried the Cleaner and Greener Local Environment Theme and the ambition to increase satisfaction with the cleanliness of the Borough and how this would be completed. He felt that reports by residents into services were not being followed up, which had led to reports being reported more than once.

The Leader responded that in terms of improving the satisfaction with the cleanliness of the Borough, there had been investments made into street cleansing and ending seasonal working. An example was provided of additional resources provided throughout the winter. In terms of assessing satisfaction and impact, an industry standard assessment was in place for the cleanliness of Street Scene, a sample of streets were assessed on a quarterly basis and measured against a set of national metrics. There had been the introduction of handheld devices for bulky waste which was assisting to ensure tasks were being completed and closed in a timely manner. There was a Love Where You Live Volunteer Scheme where volunteers were helping to keep streets clean within communities. The re-reporting of the same issues was a challenge, as resources had reduced the schedules of work had been static. As Zonal working became better established, this would help to reduce the re-reporting levels.

Councillor Bacon felt that cleanliness could range quite widely and queried whether the Service would acknowledge that potholes and pavement repairs were an important aspect of cleanliness. Councillor Bacon held up a photograph of a pothole repair which he felt was a bad pothole repair.

The Leader responded that road re-surfacing completed to a good standard lifted communities, ensuring it would look better. It was advised that the picture shown was most likely a temporary repair, temporary repairs were completed to ensure the road was safe in the short term, whilst a permanent repair was arranged.

Councillor Bacon queried page 166 and asked whether the figures on reporting included internal Member casework. It was advised that the figures did not include internal Member casework.

The Leader responded that the Service were proactive with the resources that they had and did not rely on peoples reports. An example was provided of the changes made to the Bulky Waste Service, the changes had allowed more time for the team to focus on proactive work.

Resolved:- That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the overall position in relation to the Year Ahead Delivery Plan activities.
- 2) Note the Quarter 4 and year-end 2023-24 data for the Council Plan performance measures.
- 3) Agree the revised Council Plan performance measure targets and new Year Ahead Delivery Plan for 2024-25 for the final year of the current Council Plan.
- 4) Note that future progress reports will be presented to Cabinet in January and July 2025.

15. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2023-24

The Chair invited Councillor Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance and Safe and Clean Communities to introduce the report and provide the relevant context.

The report outlined the financial revenue capital outturn position for the Council for 2023-2024 and described the detail of the reserve balance at the end of the financial year. The Council set a revenue budget of 3.2 million and a four-year Capital Programme with a cost of 6.10 million. The report was the final report in a series of financial monitoring reports to Cabinet and set out the year end revenue budget outturn position, in light of actual costs and income. The Council had an overspend position of 8.8 million before mitigation, this was due to significant pressures, demand on market placements across social care, home to school transport, and inflation remaining high in 2023-2024. It was advised that pressures were forecast to reduce by saving via central services and the use of the corporate budget risk contingency plan of 8.7 million. During 2024 the Council delivered agreed savings to help mitigate some of the forecast pressures which had risen from wider financial impacts and as a result the final outturn improved to 0.1 million from 1.2 million. The Council's final overspend position of 0.1 million had been funded by treasury management savings. Funding uncertainty remained for the local government sector beyond 2024 and the Council would continue to face significant challenges moving forward in social care funding. The Council was in a stable position in comparison to other local authorities.

The Chair invited the Director of Finance and Customer Services and the Assistant Director of Financial Services to present the report.

The Council anticipated potential future budget pressures throughout the budget setting process, this contributed to a positive end outturn. There were pressures in certain parts of the Council and mitigation in place within the budget to account for the ongoing pressures. The main pressure areas were children's placements and home to school transport, work was on-going to monitor the pressures and to develop a final settled budget for those areas. Treasury management helped and supported the pressures on an on-going basis, via tight management of cash flows and dependency on interest rates.

Councillor Blackham asked officers whether there was any significant pressure building on next year's budget, as the main part of this year's mitigation had been the treasury management of 3.7 million, which was dependent on interest rates and cash balances available. The Assistant Director for Financial Services advised that the treasury management savings were expected to be available during the current financial year, interest rates were high and cash balances were still available, therefore a benefit could continue to be generated for the Councils treasury management services, which would help to support the Councils overall

position. Treasury management was not a long-term solution to the Councils budget pressures; therefore, recovery plans were being addressed to bring services back into budget.

Councillor Carter queried why the report framed the use of using fewer reserves than anticipated, as a positive outcome as he felt it should not be portrayed this way. The Director of Finance and Customer Services advised that when the budget was set, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy was also set, this looked at a plan over several years based on what the Council believed would be the financial position going forward, on the best information available at the time. This was the reason why the Council was in a more stable and safe position than other Councils because decisions had been taken in budget setting to account for the next few years in advance. It was a positive outcome as the Councils reserves were protected for future management to ensure the Council would not have to react on an annual basis and potentially cut services.

Councillor Carter asked if there had been any indication from the Government of what a local government settlement would look like in future years. The Director of Finance and Customer Services advised that officers had not had any indication from the newly formed government so far.

Councillor Yasseen queried the delays referenced within the report, an example was provided of Forge Island and asked officers how many of the delays on large infrastructure projects were due to the need for tighter management controls and whether the delays were unavoidable from a financial perspective. The Assistant Director for Financial Services advised that there was a challenging market for all local authorities, the market had been flooded with capital delivery which created a difficulty to obtain contracts. The Council were incurring additional costs as a result of inflation and market prices, which was causing the requirement for the scope and design of projects to be re-evaluated due to the costings, this led to inevitable delays in projects. A review of governance processes was underway to improve how projects were scoped out, designed, and delivered internally to ensure capital procedures were more robust and effective. In relation to the capital outturn position, the level of delivery was increasing every year.

Councillor Yasseen queried the savings profile of the Adult Social Care Service, in particular the employee vacancies and the budget underspend in this area and asked why the Council were not maximising the budget to meet the needs of the residents of Rotherham. The Director of Finance and Customer Services advised that it was noted that across all local government areas there was difficulty in obtaining employees and vacancies were often a result of services being unable to recruit to positions. Adult Social Care had received additional money into the service throughout the financial year, via one-off funding arrangements and an additional 12.5 million pounds via the 2023-2024 Budget Plan, this had influenced the slight underspend and was driven by need and market

prices.

Councillor Marshall queried the cost of hiring employees via agencies. Officers advised that agencies were used as a last resort to address service needs, if the traditional recruitment process was unsuccessful after a number of times. The Chair advised that the Joint Consultative Committee had raised the issue of agency employees, and this would be considered as an item for the Scrutiny Work Programme.

Resolved:- That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

That Cabinet:

- 1) Note the revenue outturn position.
- 2) Note the budgeted transfer to HRA reserves increased by £4.7m following the revenue and capital outturn positions.
- 3) Note the carry forward of the combined schools balance of £2.2m in accordance with the Department for Education regulations.
- 4) Note the reserves position set out in paragraphs 2.52 to 2.57.
- 5) Note the capital outturn, funding position and programme variations as set out in paragraphs 2.58 to 2.97.
- 6) Approve the capital budget variations as detailed in section 2.80 of the report.

16. DINNINGTON PROJECTS (LEVELLING UP FUND) UPDATE REPORT

As resolved in Minute No.12 (Exclusion of the Press and Public), the Chair excluded the press and public from the meeting for the remainder of the item.

The Chair invited Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy to introduce the report and provide a high-level overview. It was advised that the report would be presented to Cabinet on 29th July 2024 to request the approval of the recommendations listed within the Report. The Cabinet Member viewed the project as an essential part of regeneration efforts within the Borough.

The Chair invited the Interim Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment to present the report.

It was advised that the funding for the project had been allocated by Government in March 2023 and the funding agreement was received in June 2023. Cabinet approved the start of the scheme in June 2023. The Service had completed the design phase and was going to ask for Cabinet's approval to enter into the delivery of the scheme, over the next few years.

The Chair thanked the Officers for the high-level overview of the report and invited members to ask questions in a closed session.

Resolved:- That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approve the delivery of the Dinnington Principal Areas of Growth project within the scope and budget as detailed in Appendix 2.
- 2) Confirm the provisional allocation of £1m of the Towns & Villages Fund to works at Dinnington.

17. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 JULY 2024 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions from 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

18. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

19. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.