

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION  
Tuesday 11 February 2025**

Present:- Councillor McKiernan (in the Chair); Councillors Adair, Beck, Beresford, C. Carter, Jackson, Jones, Mault, Rashid, Stables, Thorp, Tinsley and Williams.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Baggaley, Cowen and Havard.

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

**42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2024**

**Resolved:-** That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2024 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

**43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest to report.

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

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

**45. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair advised that there were no items of business on the agenda that would require the exclusion of the press or public from the meeting.

**46. OVERVIEW OF THE PORTFOLIO OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND SAFE AND CLEAN COMMUNITIES**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Saghir Alam, Cabinet Member for Finance and Safe and Clean Communities to the meeting.

Councillor Alam shared details of his Cabinet portfolio which ensured residents and employees were treated fairly and with dignity.

The portfolio also had an overview of the proper and efficient working of the Council and its processes, and with key elements of the Community Safety agenda and led on key Waste and Street Scene Services that were integral to the quality of life of residents.

Councillor Alam confirmed he also led on the ambition to secure

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“Excellent” accreditation under the Equality Framework for Local Government. Specific responsibilities included:-

- All matters relating to Waste Management, collection and recycling, including engagement with the BDR Waste Partnership.
- Street Scene, Street Cleansing, Litter & Fly Tipping.
- Household Waste Recycling Centres.
- To lead on Emergency Planning issues.
- To lead on day to day working of financial activity (including Revenues and Benefits), and to support the Leader in development of the Budget and Capital Strategy.
- Human resources strategies, policies and procedures.
- To lead on ICT, particularly on new ways of working and Digital Inclusion.
- To lead on Internal Audit and Risk Management.
- To lead on Health, Safety and Equalities at Work.
- Community Safety, Crime Reduction and Anti-Social Behaviour Strategies.
- Chair of the Safer Rotherham Partnership.
- All matters relating to the Channel Duty.
- All matters relating to the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (including “Protect” and “Prepare”).
- All matters relating to the deployment of portable CCTV.
- Overall responsibility for Enforcement policy and performance (including Community Protection, Environmental Health, food hygiene and the joint agreement with Doncaster MBC).
- To lead on all matters relating to Legal Services.

The Commission welcomed the opportunity to consider the content of the portfolio in detail and in doing so sought clarification on the term “channel duty”, recruitment and retention of Legal staff and costs associated with hiring locums, the biggest challenges facing Emergency Planning and whether there were any particularly “at risk” areas within the Borough associated with extremism.

Councillor Alam appreciated the opportunity to respond to questions and confirmed that “channel duty” related to where concerns were expressed and referrals were made about children in an educational setting and the need for them to receive the correct level of support with regards to Prevent.

In terms of recruitment and retention of Legal staff and the desire to keep costs to a minimum, plans were already established within the Legal teams for training and development of Para Legal officers and on the job training. There was a shortage of Legal staff within Local Government and Rotherham was taking action to help plug those gaps. There were occasions where specialised Locums were required, but every effort was being made to keep this to a minimum.

Emergency Planning was facing some difficulties in the recruitment of volunteers in the event of an incident. Naturally with staff turnover there were some changes, but more volunteers were required to be on call.

In terms of Rotherham's risk of counter terrorism, there was the protest incident last year, but in general Rotherham had no identified high risk hot spots unlike other areas.

**Resolved:-** That the detail provided by the Cabinet Member be welcomed and the contents noted.

#### **47. ROTHERHAM GATEWAY (MAINLINE AND TRAM TRAIN) STATION**

Consideration was given to a presentation on Rotherham's Gateway (Mainline and Tram Train) Station.

The Chair issued a welcome to Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member, Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment, Simon Moss, Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport, Lucy Mitchell, Regeneration Manager - Investment Zone and Leisure Economy and Nat Porter, Interim Head of Transportation Infrastructure Service.

The Cabinet Member introduced the presentation pointing out that in the last forty years the rail connection to Rotherham had been poor. This needed to be addressed if there were to be any serious aspirations for growth and prosperity within the borough.

This Gateway Project would not only provide a new mainline station, but a host of other transport and economic growth solutions. This was a serious undertaking and there were many hurdles to overcome before the plans became a reality. However, there was determination to make this happen and most importantly with the support of the Regional Mayor and the Government.

Simon Moss was invited to give his presentation which highlighted:-

- What Rotherham's Gateway Station was.
- Key Outcomes for the Station.
- Local Context for the Station.
- Project Background.
- Five Current Workstreams:-
  - ❖ Land Acquisition.
  - ❖ Mainline Station and Tram Train Stop Outline Business Case.
  - ❖ Masterplan.
  - ❖ Business Centre Feasibility Study.
  - ❖ Effingham Street Active Travel Feasibility Study completed.
- Station Design.

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- Phase 1: Station Opening 2030/31.
- Indicative Timeline & Next Steps to Delivery.
- Waverley Station.

The Chair thanked officers for their informative presentation and invited any questions.

A discussion and answer session ensued and information was shared on:-

The station was an exciting and innovative economic growth project for Rotherham and the support provided by officers was applauded. It was confirmed that approaches had been made to a number of rail operators and there was interest in various considerations with invitations onto the Steering Group. One operator also sat on the Board and involved in plans for the station's development.

Questions were also raised around the project if funding was secured, when construction would start, the timeframe and what kind of disruption would local residents face.

Representatives confirmed that indicative timeframes were available, but with any major construction there would be some disruption for those that lived in and around the area. The extent of what this would involve still remained uncertain.

Selection of the location between the two train lines and the anticipated delivery of Bassingthorpe Farm was acknowledged, but further information was sought on whether any realistic consideration had been given as to how people would get into the centre of Rotherham from the station with the constraints of bridges, the canal and river in between. Was it an expectation that in arriving at the station passengers would continue on the tram into Rotherham Central or catch public transport.

Representatives pointed out the importance of the Bassingthorpe Farm development on the station business case, but all considerations formed part of the masterplan work which was ongoing. However, Effingham Street was to be the main corridor and improvements and challenges were currently being looked at. The Tram train was only one stop from Rotherham Central giving a quick and easy access link to the town centre.

Whilst consideration would need to be given to abnormal loads it was far too early to consider a more complete level of detail. Officers were aware of bridges and this would be incorporated into the construction phase plan with detail reflective within the business case.

In questioning officers it was pointed out that access was only available where the two bridges were. No abnormal loads could be accessed via Parkgate. The plans were welcomed, but some attention needed to be

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given to the detail fairly quickly.

Representatives confirmed access was available from Greasbrough via a non-bridge route. This would be considered in due course.

Further questioning continued with reference made to Effingham Street into the town centre and whether this formed part of the full business case or was separate.

Representatives confirmed the Effingham Street Corridor was a separate consideration and would form part of wider programme of measures. Funding was focused around the station itself and the land immediately surrounding. All other considerations would be subject to other funding arrangements.

The plans were welcomed, but clarification as sought on the map that had been provided and the rail network. Would anyone travelling to London be able to travel direct from Rotherham or would the connection remain as via Doncaster.

Representatives confirmed the route to London would remain the best via Doncaster. However, journey times from the new Rotherham Station would improve journey times to Leeds, York and Birmingham.

Representatives confirmed that discussions on routes were ongoing, but there were more opportunities that would need to be procured with operators.

During the course of further questioning it was pointed out that historically Rotherham was served by Masbrough Station which was a much more capable of receiving high speed rail with four platform links. Due to the distance from the town centre rail services moved to Rotherham Central. Had consideration been given to utilising again the prime facilities at Masbrough rather than the site earmarked at Parkgate. Masbrough Station would help regenerate the town centre and had Bassingthorpe Farm on its southern end making it closer than Parkgate. What proof was available to confirm the site at Parkgate would improve regeneration in the town centre and be more commercially viable in terms of land purchase.

Representatives confirmed a significant piece of work had been undertaken as part of the strategic outline business case to look at various options for siting of the station. Masbrough had been one of the options and discussions had taken place about future locations, how they could accommodate live and overhead wires without changing structures.

Discussion ensued on overhead structures on Coronation Bridge, the hub station, old goods line and the length of the train platforms. Constraints did exist in this area in achieving a vertical line under the bridges.

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Whilst this was a positive move there remained some concern about the Parkgate location and how its location served communities in the southern part of the borough, like Maltby who were missing out. It would appear Maltby had been discounted at an early stage due to the junction at Hellaby being heavily burdened. There were no public bus service connecting to Parkgate. It was disappointing that no consideration had been given to economic growth, population. A rail transport network would have been excellent.

Representatives again pointed out that this was due to the competitive nature of funding for the station. Business cases were difficult to generate and identify benefits which was why consideration had been given to the central area of Rotherham and how this linked with the existing infrastructure shown on the map on the Sheffield/Rotherham corridor. Connectivity further away from the large urban area was more difficult, but it remained the aim to improve the functionality of the Tram train in the borough.

Maltby did benefit from the X1 bus services and the wider choices for onward connections within the town centre. It was pointed out that this project looked at opportunities for stations on existing mainline and all constraints/options were taken into consideration.

In terms of location choice careful consideration had also been given to accessibility and catchment, areas connected and the communities that would be served.

Further questions were asked about funding for the outline business case and how likely would funding be secured for the station, land acquisition and if there was a financial impact or risk to the Council. It was noted the Effingham Street Corridor would form part of a separate business case, but would this be funded by the Council and how would this link in with the Forge Island Masterplan.

Representatives confirmed funding would be in three stages. Funding for the outline had been secured and spent. The second stage was for the business case. A separate bid had been made to Government in conversation with regional partners. Dialogue was ongoing with the DfT with regards to funding in the fullness of time and they were well versed with the rail and growth benefits.

Acquisitions would be funded by the Towns Programme and officers were confident there would be no exposure of the Council to undue risk.

Other funding streams would need to be identified for the Effingham Street Corridor. Forge Island had now established strong links with the town centre and the Tram train was key along with Rotherham Central outside Forge Island.

It was highlighted that this project had been identified as one of the top

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two for the projects in South Yorkshire - the other being airport on the Sheffield to Rotherham economic corridor. SYMCA had submitted a bid to Government and Rotherham's mainline station had been identified as number one project in that submission and be of value to the region.

Further information was sought on indicative costs and it was pointed out the outline business case reflected network rail cost plans and risk factors with contingencies built in. This was around £100 million for the station and the Tram train on top. The full business case delved into the design and costs should be significantly pulled back at construction stage.

A full assessment of benefits to costs ratio was a fundamental part of the business case and the benefits did outweigh the costs. It was suggested the Benefit to Cost Ratio be confirmed following the meeting.

Further question ensued about what transport improvements were there to connect the AMP at Waverley.

It was pointed out that Waverley had been successful. The AMP was a challenge connecting to the wider public transport network so the aspiration for a new station was an early addition and officers were keen to address and achieve the connectivity that Waverley could provide. Ward Members would be kept informed of any progress and work was ongoing with SYMCA to get an outline business case submitted.

It was noted that dialogue was ongoing with the Rotherham Town Board for potential freight traffic. Freight was not one of the main drivers for the project and would need to be considered by operators for freight delivery.

Further questions were asked about the land purchases and if this was at cost to the taxpayer. It was pointed out that there would be no cost to the taxpayer. Currently the land was occupied by a number of units which the business property team were reviewing. Potentially these properties could become a potential income stream.

On there being no further questions the Chair thanked officers for their very informative presentation and responses.

**Resolved:-** (1) That the contents of the presentation be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the Benefit to Cost Ratio be confirmed.

(3) That the Full business case include consideration of the likely impacts of construction and be presented to IPSC when available.

## 48. IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - WORK PROGRAMME 2024 - 2025

The Governance Manager introduced the work programme report and

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highlighted activity to date which included:-

- Members of the School Road Safety Working Group meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January and scoping the review. Officers have been asked to carry out some research ahead of the next meeting in early March.
- Clarification was being sought from officers if members of Improving Places still had the opportunity to scrutinise the Housing Allocations Policy.
- Nature Recovery Strategy - South Yorkshire Mayor Combined Authority – this item was due to be considered at the March meeting, however this would need to be deferred to a future meeting.
- For members to consider an off agenda briefing to view progress in the Towns and Villages Fund and an update to the Our Places Fund.

When questioned it was confirmed that the Grounds Maintenance Review sat within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and representatives from Improving Places were included. The scoping meeting had taken place and plans were in the early stage of convening the first meeting.

**Resolved:-** That the update on the Work Programme be received and the activity noted.

### 49. URGENT BUSINESS

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