

THE CABINET
14th April, 2025

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Allen, Baker-Rogers, Cusworth and Taylor.

Also in attendance Councillor Steele (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alam.

141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

142. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were two questions from members of the public:

1. A question was received from Mr Hussain who sought an update in respect of negotiations with Dignity regarding the cemetery contracts and an update on the independent review document on which the Council were conducting factual accuracy checks.

In his supplementary question, Mr Hussain asked if firm arrangements for an imminent meeting to discuss Dignity's proposals could be made at the earliest opportunity, and sought clarification as to whether the independent review due to be published would be the original or an amended version of the report.

2. A question was received from Mr Azam who queried which Cabinet member would be responsible for progressing the issues concerning the Cemeteries under contract with Dignity. They reiterated their willingness to work with the Council to address capacity limitations for Muslim burials throughout the Borough.

143. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 March 2025 were approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

144. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Minute 147 Sheffield Road had an exempt appendices - The Chair advised that Appendix 1 and 2 to Minute 147 (Acquisition of land and property at Sheffield Road, S60 1DA) were exempt under Paragraph 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1974. However, the meeting remained open to the public and press throughout.

145. NEW APPLICATION FOR BUSINESS RATES RELIEF FOR HOPE CHURCH ROTHERHAM AND TARGET HOUSING LIMITED

Consideration was given to the report which presented the application for the award of Discretionary Business Rate Relief for Hope Church Rotherham and Target Housing Limited in accordance with the Council's Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy (approved by Cabinet on 12th December 2016).

Both applications were considered against the Council's criteria and policy. Both organisations received 80% charitable relief already and were applying for a further 20% discretionary rates relief.

Hope Church Rotherham was a registered charity whose main objectives were to advance the Christian faith, relieve sickness and hardship and to promote and preserve good health by the provision of funds, goods or services including the provision of counselling and support.

The property was being used as a donation drop off point for Rotherham Foodbank, which is facilitated by Hope Church Rotherham, and is also used as a store and sorting location for pending deliveries to the client services point which is located at the Unity Centre in Rotherham.

Referrals into the service were via a broad range of agencies but included Citizens Advice, Mental Health Teams, Social Care and Voluntary Agencies. These agencies issued a foodbank voucher to clients in need of support and a typical food parcel contained a minimum of three days nutritionally balanced, non-perishable, tinned and dried foods that had been donated by the local community.

The foodbank was part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by The Trussell Trust, working to combat poverty and hunger across the UK.

Target Housing Limited was a registered charity and social landlord which provided housing to the homeless or to those at risk of homelessness. Housing was available for those at risk of re-offending, victims of domestic abuse or anyone with drug related or mental health issues.

The property was used as offices to accommodate the housing support workers who supported the residents in the properties. Support staff provided individually tailored packages working in partnership with a

network of voluntary, statutory and community organisations to ensure that the people they support received the care that they needed with full independence being the end goal.

Target Housing Limited has projects across South Yorkshire, Humberside, North East Lincolnshire and East Midlands. Not all vulnerable groups are supported in every area, but the organisation has around 200 staff supporting its clients towards achieving independent living.

Hope Church fully met the Council's policy and criteria, set out and previously approved by cabinet and was therefore recommended for approval. Target Housing did not meet the Council's policy and criteria and was therefore not recommended for approval on the basis that an award of discretionary rate relief would be considered to give an unfair advantage over other social housing provisions in the borough who were offering a similar service.

Resolved:

That Cabinet

1. Approved the application for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for Hope Church Rotherham.
2. Refused the application for Target Housing Limited.

146. AGREEMENT OF THE BOROUGH'S HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND ALLOCATION FOR 2025/26

Consideration was given to the report which detailed that the Household Support Fund (HSF) had been extended by Government from April 2025 to March 2026, with £742m of funding available in England. Government had also produced accompanying detailed guidance setting out how the resource could be used. As with previous allocations, the guidance set out the expectation that the fund should be used to support vulnerable households.

Rotherham had been awarded £4.387m for the Borough for the 2025/26 financial year. The report provided recommendations for a provisional allocation of that funding, and noted that any variations arising from actual spend under each of the provisional allocations would be managed through adjusting the allocation made towards the Energy Crisis Support Scheme.

The Chair outlined the local welfare arrangements associated with what was expected to be the final year of the Household Support Fund allocation. This included familiar schemes such as food vouchers for children who received free school meals during the school holidays, contributions towards Council Tax support, energy crisis support schemes and support for care leavers amongst others.

The report was welcomed by Deputy Leader, Councillor Cusworth who noted the peace of mind offered to parents and carers in low-income families through the Council's continued school holidays food voucher offer, particularly given the increased uptake that resulted from auto-enrolment which alongside the support over Christmas and New Year made a big difference to Rotherham families.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB), who advised that the recommendations be supported. Councillor Steele, OSMB Chair outlined that discussion points during consideration of the report included how the value of the food voucher was arrived at and considered how support for care leavers linked to employment opportunities. It was noted that reassurances were received from Officers and the report was welcomed as it offered support to those most vulnerable in the Borough.

Resolved:

That Cabinet agreed:

1. That provisional allocations of the Household Support Fund Grant of £4.387m were made as follows:
 - a. £2.687m for food vouchers to children eligible for free school meals for school holidays up to and including Easter 2026.
 - b. £950k towards the estimated costs of the Council's Local Council Tax Support Top Up Scheme.
 - c. £500k to support applications from households for assistance with energy costs, through the Council's Energy Crisis Support Scheme.
 - d. £90k to provide additional financial support to care leavers.
 - e. £60k to local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to support vulnerable households over Christmas / New Year through a supplement to the Crisis Support service level agreement.
 - f. £100k to provide parcels of household items to be distributed through VCS support.
2. Delegated authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, to determine revised and final allocations for the Household Support Grant. This included provision for other eligible actions within the use of Household Support Fund should it not be possible to achieve full spend of the grant through the approved options.

147. ACQUISITION OF LAND AND PROPERTY AT SHEFFIELD ROAD, S60 1DA

Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs, and the Local Economy advised that the Council's regeneration of the Town Centre was well underway. Forge Island was up and running with more exciting developments expected in the upcoming weeks and months. Work was also well underway on the markets and library, alongside a host of public realm improvements in the pipeline and in preparation for the new Riverside residential quarter.

Consideration was given to the report which sought to enable the progression of the Town Centre regeneration programme, specifically the creation of a new residential community through the allocation of funds to undertake the acquisition of land and property at Sheffield Road.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Endorsed the allocation of the 'Strategic Acquisition Fund' to undertake the acquisition of land and property at Sheffield Road, shown in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. Authorised the Assistant Director of Property and Facilities Services to agree the terms and conditions and complete the acquisition of the land shown at Appendix 1 of the report in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs, and the Local Economy.

148. ECONOMIC INACTIVITY TRAILBLAZER

Consideration was given to the report which outlined a strategic initiative to be implemented across South Yorkshire to reduce economic inactivity by integrating employment, skills and health services and sought Cabinet approval to accept funding and implement the programme.

With £1.7m in funding for Rotherham from the Department for Work and Pensions, the programme was set a target to engage with over 1,000 economically inactive residents and transition 400 into employment in 2025/26.

The report highlighted the complex barriers to employment for economically inactive residents including health conditions, caring responsibilities and skills gaps and stressed the need for multi-agency collaboration across local authorities, health services and community organisations.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy outlined that the UK's population was ageing and businesses were already experiencing high levels of job vacancies. The cost to the economy of more people out of work due to ill health, post-pandemic was over £15 billion and rising. Labour market shortages were a huge constraint on growing the British economy.

In Rotherham, around one in three of the working-age population were not working and numbers were moving in the wrong direction. Most people who were economically inactive were in this category for reasons which were often complex and multilayered. The current system was not succeeding in helping those people into work.

The Economic Inactivity Trailblazer stemmed from the Go get Britain Working initiative with pilots in nine areas of England and Wales, one of which was South Yorkshire. In South Yorkshire the initiative would be known as 'Pathways to Work' and was an approach to change the employment support system across South Yorkshire to enhance connectedness and deliver more person-centred interventions. It was to be championed and delivered by the Local Authorities across the county, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and held ambitious and stretching targets.

The Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration and Transport highlighted the key components of the new system as described at section 1.5 of the report:

- A System Steward – operating at regional level with responsibility for policy, regulatory, funding and quality parameters of the employment service system.
- System Service Manager – at local authority level with responsibility for driving system change.
- Engagement with potential beneficiaries delivered at a hyper-local level.
- Personalised Support - Intensive Case Management (ICM) for people who have complex needs and/or significant barriers precluding them from securing employment.
- Employment activation - a set of targeted interventions focused on employers to enhance the employment opportunities for those that are economically inactive.

The OSMB Chair advised the report was the subject of lively debate at scrutiny, with questions raised concerning integration with the Council's existing Employment Solutions Team, and visibility of tangible results that targeted support where it was most needed in co-ordinated partnership with health services and other relevant partners. It was also noted that scrutiny was keen to see that veterans received support through the initiative.

Cabinet was advised that OSMB had requested a 4 month and subsequent 12 months update following implementation to afford oversight of the initial set up and pilot phases, and had supported the recommendations in the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved acceptance of the Council's indicative allocation of the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer funding to deliver activity targeted at implementing an integrated employment, skills and health system.
2. Approved use of the funding to manage the programme, commission community-based engagement activity, and personalised support (to include flexible support budgets), activate employers to create job opportunities for participants, pay for additional staff salaries (within RiDO, Employment Solutions and for other Pathways to Work roles within the Council) and cover miscellaneous costs.
3. Delegated authority to the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy and the Section 151 Officer to determine detailed use of the grant or make any subsequent amendments to the proposed budget allocations.

149. HOUSEHOLD DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Consideration was given to the report which sought Cabinet approval to undertake public consultation on the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Householder Design Guide'.

Rotherham's Local Plan provided the framework for determining planning applications whilst Supplementary Planning Documents provided additional detail and guidance to support policies within the Local Plan. Once adopted, they were a material consideration which could be taken into account when determining planning applications. Supplementary Planning Documents helped improve planning applications, which could in turn speed up the planning process and produce better outcomes for the community.

The Householder Design Guide SPD was last revised in 2019. However, this required further updating to account for the latest guidance on boundary treatment and renewable energy considerations.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved a public consultation on the draft Supplementary Planning Document at Appendix 1 of the report.
2. Noted that following consultation a further report would be brought to Cabinet to approve the adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document.

150. LICENSING ACT 2003 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which presented the draft Policy to Cabinet for review and approval prior to the commencement of a period of statutory consultation.

It was noted that a further report would be presented to Cabinet after the consultation had concluded for approval of the final Statement of Licensing Policy 2025.

Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 required the Council to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy which sets out the principles it proposes to apply in exercising functions under the Act. The Statement of Licensing Policy must be reviewed and republished at five-year intervals.

The current Statement of Licensing Policy was published in 2020, and therefore was due for the five-year review. The Cumulative Impact Policy was reviewed in 2023 and was therefore not due for further review until 2026.

The Council's Licensing Service had carried out informal consultation with partners, local licence holders and members of the public to identify areas within the current Policy that would benefit from development. Feedback was used to formulate an ambitious draft Policy that was considered to strike an appropriate balance between the need to promote a thriving licensed trade within the Borough whilst ensuring that any negative impacts of licensable activity were kept to an absolute minimum.

The Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene emphasised that the report and draft policy really sought to recognise the importance of a thriving and well-managed evening economy for Rotherham's communities, patrons and employees alike. The draft policy covered late night refreshment, regulated entertainment and the sale of alcohol and affected in excess of 850 premises licensed across the borough and underlined its impact on how those businesses operated moving forwards.

The OSMB Chair advised that the policy was well received by scrutiny. Notably, a question was raised regarding consultation with current licensees in respect of proposed changes and the provision of updates and training to enable continued compliant trading practices.

There were also discussions with regards to temporary license applications and the circumstances in which these were or were not necessary. It was also noted that additional training for elected members to generate broader awareness and understanding of the Licensing Act and its local application.

It was confirmed that OSMB supported the recommendations in the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet approved the draft Licensing Act Statement of Licensing Policy at Appendix 1 of the report for consultation in accordance with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003.

151. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Consideration was given to the circulated report, the contents of which were included as part of the relevant items and the details included accordingly.

152. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:

That the next meeting of the Cabinet would be held on Monday 12 May 2025 at 10.00 am.