

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Tuesday 8 April 2025

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

Apologies were received from Councillors Baggaley, A. Carter, Pitchley and Tinsley.

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

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

102. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 5 FEBRUARY 2025 AND 12 MARCH 2025

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 5 February 2025 and 12 March 2025, be approved as a true record.

103. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest to report.

104. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

105. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised there were no items on the agenda requiring the exclusion of the press or public.

106. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Chair invited questions from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to the Leader of the Council, and the following were noted:

- 1. Could you justify the decision made at the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SY MCA) to allocate £496 million of City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) funding to Sheffield trams – given that this overwhelmingly benefited Sheffield residents, offered only slight benefit to Rotherham, and that CRSTS money was usually split equally among constituent authorities – when that funding might have been better spent on improving transport links to the rural villages in Rotherham?**

The Leader explained that, although the decision fell outside his SY MCA

portfolio, the £496 million investment was justified because allowing the tram system to fail would have been disastrous for South Yorkshire. It was emphasised that the tram was a regional asset – owned by the SY MCA – even though it operated mainly in Sheffield. He explained that supporting a strong central city benefited the entire region and that letting the tram collapse would have been a step backward – especially when other cities were investing in light rail. He concluded that the funding met South Yorkshire’s shared obligations.

2. In light of concerns regarding the tram’s status as a regional asset, and given that the government intended to enhance rather than reverse the scrutiny protocol, why did the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) delay its full implementation of the protocol?

The Leader had outlined that public transport, including the tram system, should not have been treated solely as a commercial venture, as it provided essential services for those who relied on it, particularly in areas where private transport was not an option. The Leader drew a parallel with franchising bus services, which also required subsidies to ensure accessibility. It was emphasised that public transport, whether buses or trams, was a public good that always needed government support, with the focus being on determining the appropriate level of subsidy and its allocation. Regarding the scrutiny protocol, it was confirmed that it had been implemented, with the only outstanding issue being the allowances for members of the scrutiny committee.

3. If the tram system was considered a South Yorkshire asset, did that mean Sheffield would have been subsidising the tram station at Magna?

The Leader explained that all tram assets, including the new stop at Magna and the park and ride at Parkgate, were considered South Yorkshire assets. Therefore, they were funded from the same pool of money as the Supertram assets, with Rotherham also having a bus station in a similar context.

4. Do you believe there was a conflict of interest in your role as both the Leader of Council and the Chair of the South Yorkshire Transport Committee, where you signed off on funding for cycling lanes that were decided locally in Rotherham?

The Leader stated that he did not believe there was a conflict of interest. It was explained that, while each leader represented an area within South Yorkshire, which meant that projects inevitably affected their respective regions, the balance of democratic accountability was key. Additionally, it was noted that the SY MCA was working on establishing the appropriate level of scrutiny and decision-making processes. The Leader explained that decisions were not made by the full SY MCA committee to ensure

efficiency and that any schemes underwent a rigorous evaluation before reaching politicians. It was acknowledged that a conflict could arise if there had been an intervention in a scheme that had been recommended for refusal but emphasised that this had not occurred. Ultimately, the Leader noted the importance of balancing local representation with decisions based on adopted policies.

5. How were you promoting Rotherham to the rest of the country to attract visitors?

The Leader explained that while his primary responsibility was to the people of Rotherham, he was also working to attract inward investment both nationally and internationally. The importance of collaborating with the SY MCA to amplify their voice and advocate for Rotherham and South Yorkshire was highlighted. Additionally, the Leader emphasised engaging with wider networks, such as the Local Government Association, and ensuring the council's representation at events like the upcoming UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) in Leeds. Despite these efforts, he reiterated that his main focus remained on delivering services for the people of Rotherham.

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

Consideration was given to the update introduced by Councillor Chris Read, the Leader of the Council, regarding the Household Support Fund allocation for 2025/26. Members were informed that this was expected to be the final year of the Household Support Fund in its current form, following its initial launch in 2021. The fund for the coming year was just short of £4.4 million. The fund was intended to support vulnerable households with the cost of living. Some of the previous rules had been removed, such as the requirement to spend at least 50% of the funding on families with children and another rule that required spending a certain amount on pensioners. With these rules no longer in place, there was greater flexibility in how the funds could be allocated.

The proposal was to continue with the schemes that had been successful in the past. This included allocating nearly £2.7 million for free school meals holiday vouchers, which provided support to eligible children during school holidays. Another £950,000 was proposed for the council tax support top-up scheme, which would be supplemented with reserves to ensure continued support for working-age households. Approximately 14,000 households benefited directly from this scheme. Half a million pounds were designated for the energy crisis grants, which offered £250 grants to households facing energy challenges. These grants had an open application process and were not means-tested, allowing people from all income levels to apply, as energy challenges affected more than just low-income households.

An additional £90,000 was allocated to support care leavers, with a particular responsibility to assist this group. £60,000 was spent on the Christmas hamper scheme, in collaboration with Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), which had gone out to hundreds of families, mainly through the food bank network. Finally, £100,000 was set aside for items such as sanitary products, shampoos, soaps, and other essential goods for food banks – items that might be too expensive for some families to obtain otherwise.

In summary, the goal was to balance the allocation of funds between providing direct financial support to those already identified as being in financial hardship – such as those receiving free school meals and council tax support – and offering an open application process for the energy crisis grants, which recognised that financial challenges could impact people in a variety of circumstances.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised earlier.

Councillor Steele queried whether the amount allocated through vouchers for children was sufficient, particularly in light of rising inflation and the current value of money.

The Leader explained that there was a rationale for the current amount, as it was linked to the value of free school meals. The intention was to provide a continuation of the support children received during term time into the school holidays. However, he noted that in his personal view, this level of support was unlikely to be sufficient for a comfortable standard of living for families on very low incomes. He emphasised that the eligibility criteria for free school meals was already very restrictive. Despite this, he acknowledged that the scheme represented the best the Council could do under the circumstances.

From the information provided, Councillor Yasseen welcomed the policy and investment in local people, expressing pride in the Council's ongoing support over the years. She raised concerns that local funds were increasingly being used to address immediate needs – such as council tax support and food provision during COVID-19 – due to the effects of national government policy. She questioned how sustainable this approach was and asked whether more could be done to lobby the government about the cumulative impact of such decisions on areas like Rotherham

The Leader acknowledged Councillor Yasseen's points, agreeing with her reflections. He provided additional context, explaining that council tax benefit was once a nationally administered scheme that provided equal support regardless of age. The previous government had changed this by protecting pension-age residents but reducing the support available to working-age households. This decision had affected more than 10,000 working-age households in Rotherham. Since then, the Council had

sought to maintain as much of that support as possible, using funds such as the Household Support Fund to top up the local scheme. He described this as a “half full” scenario, where strong responses from local government, charities, and the voluntary sector had pressured the government to reintroduce some funding. As a result, the Council was now in a position to provide this support, though he emphasised that this should not be seen as a substitute for a properly funded national welfare system. He stated that the welfare system must be the responsibility of the central government and could not be sustained on a municipal level.

Looking ahead, the Leader noted the importance of influencing the national conversation, particularly as the Household Support Fund was expected to end within 12 months. He suggested there needed to be a meaningful debate – both locally and nationally, including through the Local Government Association – on how future support should be structured. He argued that the national government should provide a baseline level of support, enabling people to live with dignity and autonomy, while local authorities should have discretion to respond to unforeseen needs. He concluded by stating that while additional local funding was helpful, real change required sustained national advocacy and that making a strong, collective case would be critical in the months ahead.

Councillor Yasseen raised a further question regarding support for care leavers. While welcoming the investment, she noted that although the funding was not large, it was part of a wider effort to provide diverse support. She expressed concern that some vulnerable groups – such as care leavers – might still face negative outcomes, particularly in education and employment. She asked whether this investment and other forms of support were being delivered in a joined-up way, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for care leavers.

The Leader confirmed that he believed the support offer for care leavers was joined up. He acknowledged that the funding referenced was relatively modest but highlighted that it complemented the broader support already in place for care leavers. Social workers had some financial flexibility to respond to individual needs, and the dedicated service worked closely with care leavers to provide access to relevant facilities and support. While the approach needed to be tailored to each individual, he was confident that the support available worked well in practice to help care leavers, particularly with employment and education outcomes.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet agree:

1. That provisional allocations of the Household Support Fund Grant of £4.387m be 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. Delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, to determine revised and final allocations for the Household Support Grant. This will include 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.

108. ECONOMIC INACTIVITY TRAILBLAZER

Consideration was given to the report introduced by Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, and Tim O'Connell, Service Manager, regarding the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme. Members were informed that South Yorkshire had been selected as one of the national pilot areas for this initiative, aimed at addressing economic inactivity and supporting individuals back into employment through coordinated, targeted support.

Councillor Taylor reflected on the initial launch of the Pathways to Work Commission report the previous summer, describing the potential of the programme as highly aspirational. He noted that while it had been known for some time that South Yorkshire would serve as a trailblazer, clarity on the operational framework only emerged following a recent government announcement. He commended the report's author for the significant work done to date and emphasised the ambitious targets ahead, alongside the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in residents' lives.

The Service Manager provided an overview of the issue, explaining that an ageing UK population, a persistently high number of economically inactive individuals, and increasing job vacancies had created a growing mismatch in the labour market. In Rotherham, approximately 40,000 people had been economically inactive for several years. He highlighted that many of these individuals, despite not actively seeking employment, had indicated in prior research that they would prefer to work under the right conditions. The reasons behind economic inactivity were identified as complex and varied, ranging from caring responsibilities and education to long-term health conditions. The Trailblazer programme sought to address these barriers by unifying existing support systems such as NHS

Growth Accelerator, Department for Work and Pensions support, and a forthcoming programme titled Connect to Work. The aim was to deliver personalised assistance, collaborate with employers on sustainable workplace changes, integrate data to drive effective intervention, and ultimately grow the local workforce.

It was reported that across South Yorkshire, the initiative aimed to help approximately 2,000 people secure employment, including 420 individuals in Rotherham. In addition, the programme sought to prevent around 950 people from becoming economically inactive. While acknowledging the difficulty and ambition of the project, officers emphasised the significance of the opportunity and requested the Council's support in accepting the grant and proceeding with implementation.

Following the introduction of the report, the Chair invited further clarification regarding the allocation and use of the Trailblazer grant. In response, it was explained that the funding would initially be received by the SY MCA, which would then distribute the allocated amounts to local authorities. Rotherham's allocation was confirmed to be approximately £1.7 million.

The grant would be used to support several key elements of the programme. This included the establishment of a system service manager function within the local authority to coordinate and improve integration across support services. Funding would also be allocated to provide personalised employment support. It was noted that Rotherham already operated a successful employment support service, Employment Solutions, and the grant would allow for the expansion of this provision as well as the development of complementary activities aimed at reaching cohorts not currently engaged.

Additionally, funding would support what was described as employer activation, involving direct engagement with employers to create suitable opportunities for economically inactive individuals. This could involve initiatives such as work simulation pilots, in-work support, and the use of personalised budgets to remove barriers to employment.

In response to a follow-up question from the Chair regarding leadership and accountability, it was confirmed that the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment held overall responsibility for the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer, while the Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing & Public Health was leading the Employment Solutions team.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised earlier.

Councillor Blackham welcomed the funding opportunity but raised concerns regarding the internal management and planning for the £1.7 million allocation. While not suggesting the Council should turn the funding down, the Councillor emphasised the need for greater clarity and

direction. It was noted that the paper did not clearly outline how the funding would be used or managed.

The Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment clarified that the funding formed part of a national pilot scheme, commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), with South Yorkshire being one of nine selected areas. The pilot aimed to explore new approaches to support a client group historically underrepresented in employment due to complex barriers such as ill health or caring responsibilities. Each of the four South Yorkshire local authorities had flexibility in designing and delivering their approach.

It was further explained that the Council intended to utilise the existing Employment Solutions service due to its strong track record. In addition, there would be engagement with voluntary and community sector organisations, subject to Cabinet approval of the report. A further strand of delivery would be led by the RIGO team in reaching out to employers. The Strategic Director acknowledged that this approach would evolve over time as the pilot progressed. It was also noted that the Secretary of State had recently indicated the potential for the scheme to be extended by a further three years beyond March 2026. Additionally, it was confirmed that funding had been allocated not only to combined authorities, such as the SY MCA, but also to devolved administrations, including the Welsh Government.

Councillor Yasseen expressed strong support for the funding and hoped it would significantly impact the target cohort. While acknowledging the pilot nature of the programme, she highlighted the need for more detailed plans. She explained that a large group of economically inactive individuals, such as students and Pakistani women in Rotherham, required tailored support with entering the job market. The Councillor also noted the importance of addressing the psychological barriers many in the target group face. She questioned the ambition of the target to engage thousands of individuals, given the complexities involved.

The Service Manager acknowledged that engaging thousands of people was a challenging target. He emphasised the need for innovative and flexible approaches to reach the target group, particularly by engaging the voluntary and community sectors, as many individuals do not feel comfortable with traditional routes like DWP or council services. The pilot programme would allow for experimentation with different methods of engagement. He noted that research from the Pathways to Work programme indicated that while many people in the target group expressed interest in working, they currently do not perceive the right support or circumstances to be available, leading to their continued disengagement.

There was a suggestion to further collaborate with health services, particularly addressing health-related barriers to engagement, and the potential of expanding social prescribing to include this group. In

response, it was confirmed that collaboration with the health sector was a key component of the Pathways to Work approach. Efforts had been made to integrate health services with employment support, such as bringing work coaches into health settings. This aimed to engage a large portion of the economically inactive population, especially those with health issues. However, it was noted that health was just one aspect, and other factors contributing to economic inactivity would also need to be addressed with appropriate support.

Councillor Keenan inquired whether the program had specifically considered working with veterans, recognising that many ex-service personnel possess valuable skills but may face challenges re-entering the workforce due to factors such as PTSD, housing issues, and other circumstances. She asked if there were plans to collaborate with the Armed Forces Covenant Group or Armed Forces Charities to explore back-to-work solutions for veterans.

In response, the Service Manager explained that veterans were included as a cohort in the connect to work initiative, which was part of the broader Pathways to Work program. The goal of the initiative was to connect and integrate support systems, as veterans often need assistance from the broader system, not just veteran-specific services. The challenge, the Service Manager noted, was to ensure that veterans receive personalised support while also connecting them to a wider network of services. He confirmed that engagement with veterans' groups and organisations would be a priority, and they would be open to further discussions with these communities.

Councillor Marshall asked whether the program would be extended and if there were any specific criteria that needed to be met for an extension, such as meeting the set targets. It was confirmed that reassurances had been received regarding no clawback of funding. Although no explicit targets were set for the extension, it was noted that the government had already expressed a preference to continue the approach for a longer period. It was suggested that, while no specific targets had been outlined, demonstrating progress and success would likely be important for securing the extension.

Councillor Bacon sought clarification about the progress of the Employment Solutions Team, noting that there hadn't been much inroad on employment. In response, the Chief Executive (CEX) explained that when the investment in Employment Solutions was made, metrics were provided showing that the team had supported 879 people into employment and 825 into training since 2022. Despite the lower numbers, the team had higher success rates compared to other routes, as they worked with some of the hardest-to-reach individuals. The outcomes of Employment Solutions were among the top quartile when compared to similar organisations. The lower numbers reflected the challenge of engaging these individuals, but the effectiveness of the team had been demonstrated through evaluations presented in previous budget and

scrutiny reports.

Additionally, the Councillor asked if the funding was known before the budget was set and the £718,000 allocated to the Employment Solutions Team. The Leader of the Council responded that while the exact amount of funding was unknown, ongoing negotiations with the government were taking place. The Leader emphasised that having a permanent workforce in Rotherham to support people back into work was a stronger position than relying on temporary, shifting grant funding. The Leader confirmed they would make the same decision again, as it ensured a more stable approach for Rotherham.

Councillor Bacon expressed concern, suggesting that the £718,000 was taken away from other frontline services to support a niche area and questioning why this was done before the funding was confirmed. The Leader clarified that Rotherham faced significant challenges, such as unemployment, low wages, and economic inactivity. Public engagement showed overwhelming support for the council's action to help the local economy, and the Leader agreed with that view. The Leader stated they would prefer having a dedicated team of people helping those out of work, rather than relying on uncertain government funding in the future.

Following the discussion, the Chair recommended that the OSMB would receive a progress update on the implementation of the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme within four months and a further report within twelve months following its implementation.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Approve 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. Approve 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. Delegate 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.

Further actions that arose from discussions were that:

- OSMB would receive a progress update on the implementation Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme as soon as possible but

within four months.

- OSMB would receive an update on the progress of the Economic Inactivity Trailblazer programme within twelve months following its implementation.

109. LICENSING ACT 2003 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report introduced by Councillor Taylor, Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, and Alan Pogorzelec, Service Manager, regarding the Statement of Licensing Policy. It was noted that the policy formed part of the cyclical review process and sought to align the current licensing framework with previously adopted taxi policy decisions. Members were informed that the borough's existing taxi licensing policies had been widely regarded as some of the most effective in the country, offering high levels of public protection. The revised Statement of Licensing Policy aimed to bring other areas of licensing in line with the ethos and ambition established through those prior decisions.

Further detail was provided on the scope and intent of the proposed policy. Members were informed that the policy took an ambitious approach, mirroring the borough's leading stance on taxi licensing. While the Licensing Act 2003 policy had previously adhered strictly to statutory requirements, this revision demonstrated a broader vision, aiming to enhance local standards and outcomes.

It was noted that the report had been presented at a previous meeting, but issues had arisen regarding the completeness of the documentation. In particular, key appendices had been omitted at the time. Members' attention was therefore drawn to the appendices included in the current report – specifically Appendices F, G and H – which contained significant additions and revisions, highlighted in yellow for clarity. The main body of the policy remained largely unchanged, save for updates reflecting legislative amendments and minor procedural refinements. However, the appendices contained more substantial changes. Appendix F detailed policies related to the licensing objectives, Appendix G detailed premises specific policies, while Appendix H introduced measures concerning environmental best practices, women's safety, and the implementation of core operating hours. Additional clarification had also been provided throughout the document concerning the management of large-scale events.

Additionally, it was informed that while the management of large events was not new at the national level, it represented an emerging area of focus within the borough. Reference was made to the success of the Reyton's concert in Clifton Park, which had sparked further interest in hosting similar events locally. The policy therefore included provisions aimed at facilitating well-managed, responsible large events, including those at Wentworth Woodhouse and Hooton Lodge.

In conclusion, it was emphasised that the revised policy struck a careful balance. While ensuring the effective implementation of the Council's responsibilities under the Licensing Act, it also supported economic development by avoiding an overly restrictive or bureaucratic approach. Members welcomed the ambition and considered the policy a positive step forward for licensing across the borough.

The Chair invited members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) to raise questions and queries on the points raised earlier.

Councillor McKiernan sought clarification on how current licence holders would be informed of the proposed changes to the Statement of Licensing Policy. Concern was expressed that simply issuing the updated policy may not be sufficient and that additional steps should be taken to ensure the changes were understood and acknowledged.

In response, the Service Manager confirmed that all current licence holders would be consulted as part of the policy revision process. The proposed changes would be clearly outlined within the consultation materials to ensure transparency and understanding. In addition to this, it was noted that the Council had, over the past 12 months, begun to develop a programme of awareness and refresher training sessions for the licensed trade. These sessions, delivered in partnership with community safety teams and the police, would include updates on new policy developments and clarify expectations for licence holders. It was also highlighted that these sessions would provide an opportunity to brief stakeholders on wider legislative changes, including the recently passed Martin's Law, which would begin to be implemented over the next two years. Members were reassured that they would be kept fully informed of developments and were offered to provide further briefings on licensing matters upon request.

Councillor Yasseen sought clarification regarding the content of Appendix 1 within the policy document, specifically in relation to licensable activities listed from section 1.3 onwards. A query was raised regarding the definition and scope of "regulated entertainment," including activities such as the performance of a play, exhibition of a film, and others. Further questions were asked about the exemptions listed in section 1.3.3, with particular reference to whether showing a film always required a licence or if certain circumstances were exempt.

In response, the Service Manager acknowledged the complexity of the Licensing Act 2003 and explained that the policy aimed to clearly set out which activities required a licence, and which did not. It was clarified that, in general terms, film screenings intended for profit – including for fundraising purposes – would typically fall within the scope of licensable activities. However, exemptions may apply depending on the nature of the organisation and the context in which the event was held.

It was further explained that activities organised by not-for-profit groups or

registered charities may benefit from specific exemptions not available to individuals or commercial organisers. Key factors influencing whether a licence would be required included the type of venue, the nature of the film, and the status of the organising body. Members were advised that while general guidance could be provided, the nuances of the legislation meant that each situation should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Officers, therefore, recommended that organisers seek direct advice where there was uncertainty regarding licensing requirements.

Councillor Yasseen sought further clarification regarding section 1.3.4 of the policy. Specifically, she wanted to know whether the figures mentioned in the document were unique to Rotherham or if they were set by national legislation. In response, the Service Manager clarified that the figures and details in section 1.3, including audience sizes and other limits, were directly derived from the Licensing Act 2003. These were not specific to Rotherham but were legislative requirements that applied nationally under the Act.

The Councillor also inquired about what changes or new elements the policy introduced, particularly what aspects would be different or considered best practice, especially at the local level, since national legislation would remain unchanged.

The Service Manager responded that the policy was designed to offer best practice suggestions for the licensed trade, many of which had emerged through interactions with the sector. It was noted that many businesses in the licensed trade were eager to adopt best practices to ensure success and stand out in a competitive market. The updated policy provided these businesses with guidance on areas such as environmental best practices, women's safety, counter-terrorism measures, and the consideration of Martin's Law, which were not addressed in the previous policy. It was explained that sections of the policy containing new information were highlighted in yellow for easy reference. These included specific recommendations on environmental responsibility, safety protocols, and counterterrorism, all of which aimed to enhance the operation of licensed premises and support businesses in meeting emerging challenges. The Service Manager emphasised that the policy did not mandate these practices but offered them as useful suggestions that businesses could adopt voluntarily.

Further conversation took place regarding section 2.10 of the main policy document, which focuses on promoting equality and inclusion in licensed venues. Councillor Yasseen referred to past experiences, particularly during the COVID-19 period, where issues related to equality in the licensing process had been observed. The Councillor expressed a desire to see greater assurance that equality and inclusion would be truly embedded and implemented within the licensing service as the consultation progressed. It was acknowledged that the issue of equity and inclusion in licensing had been a historical concern, and the Councillor would continue to monitor this closely during the consultation.

In response, the Chair reassured that the approach now involved consulting with the public and the trade to ensure better practices. The Chair also highlighted that elected members had the responsibility to take advice from officers and make decisions based on that advice. Additionally, the Chair confirmed that once the consultation was complete and the recommendations were finalised, a further report would be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board before being considered by the Cabinet. This would include the outcome of the consultation and any revised policy changes.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supported the recommendations that Cabinet:

1. Approve the draft Licensing Act Statement of Licensing Policy attached to this report as Appendix 1 for consultation in accordance with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003.

Further actions that arose from discussions were that:

- It was agreed that following the consultation, a further report would be submitted to OSMB ahead of its consideration by Cabinet which included the outcome of the consultation a revised Policy.

110. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme and received the following updates:

- Spotlight review into life-saving equipment - This review was still in the early stages, with further information being obtained to understand the work already undertaken as part of the 'Open Water Safety Meetings'.
- Regarding the Grass Cutting / Grounds Maintenance review – A date was being sourced for the initial meeting to be held.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

111. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

The Chair of the Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) reported that the Commission had recently considered topics such as, the Bereavement Services Annual Report, Flooding Alleviation Update, Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report, an overview of the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Safe and Clean Communities, Consideration of the outline plan of the planned trainline extension to Waverley and Parkgate (Mainline station proposal, considering any potential impacts, the tenant Scrutiny report: How Rotherham Council supports new tenants and the Climate Emergency Annual Report 2025.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would be conducting a

spotlight review on Grass Cutting and Ground Maintenance, members of IPSC would be invited to join the review.

The initial scoping information for the School Road Safety working group was being sought and collated. Similar work was being undertaken by officers within the Council so discussions were taking place to determine how this could be linked, to avoid duplication of work.

The workshop to review the findings of the consultation conducted for the 2025-2028 Housing Strategy prior to the strategy's final development took place in December 2024 and the outcomes will feed into the Cabinet report when brought forward.

In relation to future work, the Commission was due to scrutinise the final progress report on the 2022-25 Housing Strategy, in June 2025, the Tenant Scrutiny Review on Tenancy Health Checks report, in July 2025 and the Consultation on the Housing Strategy for 2025-28 report, in July 2025.

The Vice-Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC) reported that at the most recent meeting, the Commission scrutinised the Rotherham Kinship Care Local Offer and an update from the Youth Justice Service. Recommendations were made on both updates. At the next meeting in April, the Commission would scrutinise an update on the progress of the Domestic Abuse Strategy.

The Commission were recently involved in an additional consultation engagement session with the Access to Education Team. The Team captured members feedback on the revision of the Elective Home Education Policy Review. The revised policy would be presented back to the Commission, before going to Cabinet.

The Commission had an additional workshop arranged to focus on the scrutiny of updates on the Prevent Programme and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Work had begun to scope a potential review on "Trauma and Children Missing Education", which had been proposed by a member of the Commission.

The Vice-Chair of the Health Select Commission reported that the Commission had recently scrutinised Sleep which was relevant to the People Are Safe, Healthy, And Live Well and Every Child Able to Fulfil Their Potential Council Plan Themes. The Commission had also scrutinised the Adult Social Care Commissioning, which was relevant to the People Are Safe, Healthy, And Live Well and Expanding Economic Opportunity Council Plan themes. The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT) Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) Centre Development and the 18 Week Waiting Time Challenge were both scrutinised and were relevant to the People Are Safe, Healthy, And Live Well and Expanding Economic

Opportunity Council Plan themes.

Members of the Commission had received a copy of the Darzi Report and supporting resources ahead of the March meeting of the Commission, to aid consideration of TRFT's items and to assist in developing the Commission's work programme for the next municipal year.

At the next meeting in May, the Commission would scrutinise the Adult Mental Health Pathway. Immediately following meeting in May, a workshop would be held involving Yorkshire Cancer Alliance and the Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, regarding the relocation of the Lung Clinic.

Evidence gathering in relation to the Access to Contraception workshop was on-going. Planning and preparation for the Quality Accounts was underway.

112. **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 APRIL 2025 TO 30 JUNE 2025**

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025.

The following items were considered as possible items for pre-decision scrutiny at the May OSMB meeting:

- Council Plan 2025 - 2028 & New Year Ahead Delivery Plan
- Interim Local Development Scheme
- Employment Solutions 2025-26

It was discussed that the Improving Lives Select Commission could give consideration of the Family Prosperity Strategy (Addressing Child Poverty) item which was due to be present to Cabinet in May.

The following items were considered as possible items for pre-decision scrutiny at the June OSMB meeting:

- Finance Update - June 2025
- Social Value Annual Report

It was discussed that whilst OSMB could lead on consideration of the Selective Licensing Policy, members of the Improving Places Select Commission be invited to join OSMB for that item as it fell within the remit of both bodies.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:

1. Considered the contents of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 and
2. Agreed that the Council Plan 2025 - 2028 & New Year Ahead Delivery Plan, the Interim Local Development Scheme and Employment Solutions 2025-26 items would be considered at the May OSMB meeting.

3. Agreed that the Improving Lives Select Commission would give consideration of the Family Prosperity Strategy (Addressing Child Poverty) item which was due to be present to Cabinet in May.
4. Agreed that the Finance Update - June 2025, and the Social Value Annual Report would be considered at the June OSMB meeting.
5. Agreed that there would be joint consideration of the Selective Licensing Policy due for presentation to the June Cabinet meeting by members of the Improving Places Select Commission and OSMB.

113. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

114. URGENT BUSINESS

The Assistant Chief Executive, Jo Brown explained that the Council had an initial informal peer assessment against the Equalities Framework for Local Government by colleagues at Doncaster Council, which took place just prior to Christmas. In order to provide a comprehensive review, Doncaster Council had asked if a wider cohort of members, not including Cabinet Members could be involved in order to provide a final report during May 2025.

This was an open invitation to members of OSMB, many of whom were interested in the Council's equalities journey to be part of that review. A date and time for this would be circulated following the meeting but members were invited to provide their feedback on how the Council was progressing on its equalities journey. The meeting would be held face to face.

Councillor Yasseen went on to raise a general point regarding OSMB meetings moving to Tuesdays to avoid clashes with Council meetings. She felt there were many other opportunities to hold OSMB meetings on a Wednesday that would avoid clashes with Council. The Governance Manager explained that there were a couple of occasions where OSMB meetings had been moved to avoid Council meetings however due to the scheduling requirements for Cabinet meetings, there were limited options as to when the OSMB meetings could be scheduled for to enable pre-decision scrutiny to take place. Councillor Yasseen felt this was an added pressure for members that could be avoided in future.