

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 2 September 2025

Present:- Councillor McKiernan (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Allen, Beck, C. Carter, Jackson, Jones, Lelliott, Rashid, Sheppard, Stables, Taylor, Thorp and Tinsley.

Also in attendance were Mrs. K. Bacon and Mrs. M. Jaques (Rotherfed Co-optees).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Adair.

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

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

17. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 8 JULY 2025

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th July 2025 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Allen declared a personal interest in Minute No. 21 (Housing Strategy 2025-2030) on the grounds of being the former Cabinet Member for Housing.

Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 22 (Review of Selective Licensing 2020-2025) on the grounds that he resides in one of the areas subject to Selective Licensing, although in a privately owned property.

Councillor Tinsley declared a personal interest in Minute No. 22 (Review of Selective Licensing 2020-2025) on the grounds that he is a landlord and Selective Licence holder in an area subject to Selective Licensing.

Councillor Stables declared a personal interest in Minute No. 22 (Review of Selective Licensing 2020-2025) on the grounds that she is a landlord and Selective Licence holder in an area subject to Selective Licensing.

19. 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.

20. 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.

21. HOUSING STRATEGY 2025-2030

At the Chair's invitation, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, introduced the item, explaining that housing affects every resident in the borough. Getting the Housing Strategy right was imperative to support the delivery of the overall Council plan and to ensure that everybody could live in a safe, warm and decent home.

Sarah Watts, Strategic Housing Manager, explained that the draft Housing Strategy was the fifth chapter of the Council's 30-year strategy. The Strategy had changed in time period length from three years to five years in order to align with the Council Plan. The Strategy would be taken to Cabinet for approval on 15 September 2025. Cabinet would be asked to delegate approval to agree the final Action Plan for the Housing Strategy to the Strategic Director and it was planned to bring this draft Action Plan to IPSC in October so that members could help shape the Plan and then receive annual progress reports on its delivery.

The Strategic Housing Manager explained that there had been a slight revision to the wording of priority 3 since the papers had been published for IPSC – *"Preventing homelessness and supporting our residents to live independently"* had been altered to *"Supporting our residents to live independently, including through the prevention of homelessness"*.

Garry Newton, Housing Development Intelligence Coordinator, provided a summary of the consultation process that had been carried out since August 2024, to understand what residents' main housing priorities were, as individuals and families. Feedback on the Strategy had been obtained from all relevant directorates across the council and from officers involved in the Council Plan. This collaboration had ensured that all aims and priorities within the Strategy were tied up to create a one council approach.

The Strategic Housing Manager went through the four key priorities of the Housing Strategy in more detail, and explained that there were three cross-cutting aims that flow through them, being:-

- Keeping residents safe and warm
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Reducing inequalities in and between communities

Priority 1 – Building high quality, sustainable and affordable new homes

This priority would be about the Council leading by example with the homes that are built under its development programme and working across the housing sector to meet local housing need and provide good quality homes that are fit for the future. This would be done by continuing with the Council's development programme to deliver more homes for Council rent whilst ensuring that 25% of affordable housing is delivered through planning policy.

Priority 2 – Improving the safety, quality and energy efficiency of our homes

This priority would be about holding all landlords to account to ensure that no residents are living in poor quality and unsafe homes. The Council, as a landlord, will ensure that it meets social housing requirements around decency, compliance, safety, and tenant satisfaction. The Council will also work with landlords to help them to address hazards within their properties and to support them with the introduction of the Renters Reform Bill.

Priority 3 - Supporting our residents to live independently, including through the prevention of homelessness

This priority would be about the Council ensuring that it know its residents well to help meet their accommodation and support needs. This would be achieved through providing access to appropriate aids and adaptations and also ensuring that the Council's housing allocations policy works well.

Priority 4 – Ensuring that our neighbourhoods are safe, happy and thriving

This priority reflected a theme which runs through the Council Plan. Housing will play its part in this through delivery of an empty homes plan, targeting properties which blight communities and impact on people's quality of life. There will also be continued investment into communities and shared spaces, improving the way the Council engages with tenants and residents to shape their communities and tackle anti-social behaviour when it presents.

The Chair invited members of the Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) to raise questions and queries on the Report, draft Housing Strategy and presentation and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:

Councillor Thorp asked how the service could enforce action against the owner of an empty property which blights a community? The Strategic Housing Manager explained that there would be a dual approach between the Housing team and Enforcement team to try and get private owners to bring a derelict property back into use. An Empty Homes Officer would carry out initial investigation work and try and engage with owners to create an action plan in order to avoid formal enforcement. The Council had also had some success via an acquisitions programme, where owners have been willing to offer their property to the Council.

Councillor Thorp also asked how residents/members can report any issues with empty properties. The Strategic Housing Manager confirmed that there is an online form on the Council website to report issues with empty properties and would circulate details after the meeting.

Councillor Taylor enquired what a typical retrofit for a Council owned property would look like, bearing in mind the commitment to energy efficiency in Priority 2 of the Housing Strategy. How long would it take and was there a scheduled programme? John Holman, the Interim Assistant

Director of Housing, responded by explaining that the fabric of the property would be dealt with first - external wall insulation or cavity wall insulation, combined with loft insulation. Properties would be prioritised based on which were in the worst condition and where the government grant would support. The government grant would currently support bringing an EPC rated D property up to a C rating. There were some Council-owned properties currently with an E rating which would be funded internally. The Interim Assistant Director of Housing confirmed that there was a programme of retrofit works which could be shared with members and that the Council had to date, been successful in securing government grants.

The Chair asked whether, bearing in mind the Council's commitment to provide 1,000 more homes, there were enough brownfield sites within the borough to provide this or would development on greenbelt land need to be considered? Andrew Bramdige, the Strategic Director for Regeneration & Environment, explained that a report would go before Cabinet on 15 September setting out the Local Development Strategy, which provided the timetable for the production of a new local plan up until 2029. One of the steps in this would be a call for new development sites.

Councillor Lelliot raised an issue surrounding Priority 3 – Neighbourhoods are safe, happy and thriving. Councillor Lelliot reported that a lot of her casework involved reports of anti-social behaviour, particularly by council tenants, and residents' dissatisfaction with the amount of time that it often took for the Council to take any action against them. Councillor Lelliot felt that the draft Housing Strategy did not sufficiently address the issue of anti-social behaviour and that the Council's response to it was not robust enough. Councillor Lelliot commented that how effectively issues are addressed depended a lot on the strength of the relevant Housing Officer and the other community support personnel involved and that a stronger, more joined up approach should be reflected in the Strategy.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing agreed that a joined-up approach by different partners and agencies was key in dealing with anti-social behaviour. Where council tenants are involved, this would be tackled by Tenancy Officers and Housing Management Officers as the Council has powers under its tenancy agreements to take action. However, there were often anti-social behaviour issues that did not involve council tenants and there were wider challenges with health and mental health. It was suggested by the Interim Assistant Director of Housing (and further recommended by the Cabinet Member later in the meeting) that IPSC may wish to consider a "deep dive" workshop session on anti-social behaviour to fully explore the issues affecting residents. This suggestion was welcomed by members.

Councillor Stables asked a question about the increased council tax liability that applied to long-term empty properties. Councillor Stables understood that there was a national register of empty properties and that once a property had been in a state of disrepair for a long time, the owner

could apply for it to be exempt from council tax. Councillor Stables commented that this seemed very unfair and a way in which owners could evade liability or enforcement and asked whether there were any plans for the Council to lobby the government to change this?

The Strategic Housing Manager agreed that this a frustrating loophole and that such cases are dealt with by the District Valuation Officer. However, cases should still be reported to the Empty Properties team. The Chair asked if the Council had a list of properties deemed uninhabitable and the Strategic Housing Manager confirmed that Housing worked with Council Tax throughout the year to obtain a full list of properties declared empty.

Councillor Jackson asked that more detail be provided on delivering improvements to council estates, communal and shared areas and queried if there was a budget for this? The Strategic Housing Manager commented that where there were communal spaces on areas of housing land or possibly large blocks of flats with communal areas, revenue spent on these areas would come from the Housing budget. Keeping these areas clean, tidy and safe was a factor that would be considered in housing investment.

Councillor Tinsley referred to one of the empty property success stories mentioned in the draft strategy, which had been eventually redeveloped and sold on for three times its previous value. Councillor Tinsley asked whether the Council considered going down the compulsory purchase route when all other avenues had been exhausted? The Strategic Housing Manager commented that compulsory purchase is an available option but that all properties were assessed to ensure the right route was used, with the ultimate aim of bringing properties back into use to meet housing need.

Councillor Tinsley also returned to the earlier issue of anti-social behaviour and agreed that a more joined up approach was required, with outcomes varying depending on the Housing Officer involved. He suggested that there could be a push on neighbourhood working to ensure that each Housing Officer knew their area well and worked closely with other stakeholders in that area. The Interim Assistant Director of Housing confirmed that there was an established neighbourhood model but accepted the point that as the nature of tenancy management had changed in recent years, this could be revisited and developed.

Councillor Thorp mentioned issues his constituents had experienced with housing allocation, namely poor communication and a lack of understanding as to where they sat on the list of priority. The Interim Assistant Director of Housing responded that this issue concerned the Housing Allocations Policy, which would also be going to Cabinet in September, and would be better looked at in detail separately.

Councillor Allen questioned how the Council planned to measure success

in creating “safe, happy and thriving neighbourhoods”? This priority was more people than place focused and residents were frequently telling the Council of their concerns around anti-social behaviour. Councillor Allen felt that this had not been reflected adequately within the current draft strategy and suggested that building a case study on anti-social behaviour within the strategy would help to allay residents’ concerns.

Councillor Allen further raised reservations about the use of the word “happy” within Priority 4 as this was a very subjective word which could mean many different things to different people. Happiness would be very difficult to measure, compared to “safe” and “thriving”. Councillor Allen also commented that it would be good to reflect tenant satisfaction measures more within the Strategy.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing agreed that the inclusion of further case studies would be a good idea and accepted the point regarding the use of the word “happy” which could be taken forward to Cabinet for consideration. The Housing Development Intelligence Coordinator commented that the word “happy” had been used to align with the Council Plan. The Cabinet Member for Housing also agreed with Councillor Allen’s point about the use of the word “happy” and after some discussion amongst members, it was suggested that an alternative wording for Priority 4 of the draft Housing Strategy should be put forward to Cabinet for consideration - *“safe, thriving and places people want to live in”*.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing explained that tenant satisfaction was reported on monthly and that information on this is provided on the council website. The Strategic Housing Manager further commented that tenant satisfaction measures would be key for the annual reporting on the Housing Strategy and suggested that there could be more discussion on this in the October IPSC meeting when members can help to develop that Action Plan.

Councillor Sheppard raised questions around the upcoming Renters’ Rights Bill. How did the service think this would change the way the Council works with tenants to help them secure long-term tenancies and protect them in their existing tenancies? How would the Council communicate the impact of the changes to tenants in the private sector? The Strategic Housing Manager confirmed that there was a communications plan around the Renters’ Rights Bill and that the Housing team were working closely with colleagues in homelessness to plan for the increased demand for accommodation. Private landlords were also being encouraged to “Call Before You Serve” and engage with the Council early, before serving eviction notices, so that the Council could act as a mediator and try and work out a better solution, to avoid some evictions.

Councillor Ahmed raised a question around supporting residents with complex needs. Councillor Ahmed was aware that there were currently no

respite properties available to provide positive behaviour support and felt that the alternatives offered to families of supporting them from home, did not meet need. The Strategic Housing Manager acknowledged the ongoing challenges in this area of conflicting need and confirmed that the Housing team would continue to work closely with colleagues in Adult Social Care and Children & Young People's Services to understand what future demand would look like. A government directive was expected towards the end of the year around a supported housing strategy and once received, the Housing team would work through the detail of that.

Councillor Jones commented that anti-social behaviour continues to be a huge issue and often occurred on areas of land within housing estates that are not well-maintained e.g alleyways, pieces of grass. Councillor Jones felt that Housing Officers were less visible and that residents and members no longer had direct contact details for Housing Officers, which had led to long delays in issues being addressed. Councillor Jones suggested that estate walkabouts, which used to regularly take place, should be reinstated.

The Interim Assistant Director of Housing accepted that a programme of regular estate walkabouts had slipped and was something the service wanted to reinstate. Councillor Jackson commented that in his ward, walkabouts and meetings with neighbourhood partners had never stopped, so there must be variations by area.

Councillor Jackson asked whether the Council worked with the NHS when dealing with adaptations to properties due to medical need/rehab requirements. Had existing properties been adapted and was there the ability to design new houses with adaptations built in? The Strategic Housing Manager confirmed that work was done with the Adult Social Care team and the NHS to look at complex needs and adaptations. How to plan for future need within existing housing stock and future development would always be fed into conversations with housing developers and there was an Aid and Adaptations Policy where, if people wished to stay at home, funding would be available to enable this. The Interim Assistant Director of Housing added that the Housing team had its own occupational therapists who go out to assess properties to make sure they are suitable for immediate and longer-term needs.

Councillor Jackson also commented that he agreed that the more case study examples would be useful and would welcome the inclusion of both positive and negative outcomes to demonstrate the fact that two scenarios which seemingly look similar, could have very different outcomes depending on circumstance. The Interim Assistant Director of Housing agreed that there were always important learning points to share and suggested that these case studies be incorporated into the work on the Action Plan which the Housing team will bring back to IPSC in October. Members were in agreement with this approach.

With regard to the suggested inclusion of wording addressing anti-social

behaviour within the Housing Strategy, Councillor Lelliot provided draft wording via email to the Chair which was read out to the Commission and agreed upon by the members present.

Resolved:-

(1) That the contents of the draft Housing Strategy 2025 – 2030 be noted;

(2) That a further report on the draft Housing Strategy Action Plan be presented to the Improving Places Select Commission at the next scheduled meeting on Tuesday 21 October 2025, subject to the decision of Cabinet on the Housing Strategy at their meeting on 15 September 2025;

(3) That the following considerations be provided to the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board to present to Cabinet on behalf of IPSC when they meet to consider the draft Housing Strategy on 15 September 2025:-

a) That reference is made within the Housing Strategy to compulsory training being delivered to all Housing/Tenancy Officers regarding anti-social behaviour, using the following suggested wording:

“Our housing officers undergo comprehensive training to effectively deal with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). This training ensures that they:

- Identify and understand ASB issues*
- Know when and how to report incidents*
- Are aware of the powers available to the council to address ASB.”*

Equipped with this knowledge, our officers can take prompt and effective action to tackle ASB, providing a safer and more supportive environment for our community.”

b) That the word “*happy*” is removed from Priority 4 of the Housing Strategy – “*safe, happy and thriving*” and replaced with “*safe, thriving and places people want to live in*”. Members felt that the word “happy” is too subjective and difficult to measure as it can mean different things to different people;

(4) That more case studies with a variety of outcomes are incorporated into the draft Housing Strategy Action Plan in order to demonstrate lessons learnt and how particular circumstances can lead to different outcomes; and

(5) That a “deep dive” into Anti-Social Behaviour and the challenges it creates for the borough be delivered to IPSC at a later date, to be determined.

22. REVIEW OF SELECTIVE LICENSING 2020-2025

At the Chair's invitation, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Beresford, introduced the presentation, which looked back on the former Selective Licensing Scheme that ran from 1 May 2020 to 30 April 2025. The Chair reminded members that this was a review, not a forward look, and that proposals for the new selective licensing scheme would come before OSMB on 8 October 2025, whereupon members of IPSC would be invited to comment. Questions for this forum should be on the former scheme.

Emma Ellis, Head of Service for Community Safety & Regulatory Services (Head of Service), explained that Selective Licensing enables the Council to work proactively rather than reactively – properties could be inspected without a complaint having first been raised. The proactive nature of the scheme had been key to driving improvements in living standards.

The Head of Service summarised for members the basis of the former selective licensing declaration criteria, which led to six areas within the borough becoming subject to Selective Licensing from 1 May 2020 – Maltby, Dinnington, Masbrough, Parkgate, Thurgroft and Eastwood.

The presentation provided information on the outcomes and achievements of the scheme and provided examples of the types of Category 1 hazards (serious and immediate risk to health and safety) and Category 2 hazards (less severe but still pose a potential risk) that were revealed from inspections. Many tenants would not have reported these issues to the Council so they would not have been uncovered and dealt with without Selective Licensing. The BRE Housing Health Cost Calculator had been used to calculate the level of potential savings to the NHS (£148,542) in identifying these issues before harm to health was done.

The Head of Service explained that the scheme had led to significant areas of criminality and anti-social behaviour being uncovered and dealt with. 311 cannabis cultivations were detected and £40m worth of cannabis seized (street value). A number of properties that were inspected had links to slavery, exploitation and organised crime.

The Head of Service explained that the service had been committed to carrying out 100% of inspections and most of the identified improvements did take place. The Head of Service reflected that it can be difficult from street level to see the real impact of Selective Licensing. However, in all cases, either the issues identified were dealt with and rectified or the landlords were held to account and this had made a real difference to people's living conditions. Improvements had not been consistent across the areas though – Masbrough, for example, had a high hazard rate of 95.8% from the first round of inspections, and this area had been subject to Selective Licensing before. In contrast, Maltby had the lowest hazard rate (48%).

The Head of Service commented that the Covid pandemic had had an impact on the scheme, delaying the start of the inspections process and effectively reducing the operational lifespan of the scheme from 5 years down to 3.5 years. Other challenges experienced had been staffing shortages and data limitations, which affected performance tracking. In spite of these challenges, the service successfully delivered 100% of the inspections. 48 prosecutions were pursued against landlords and of these, 15 had been successful and the remainder were either still going through the process or had been withdrawn.

The Head of Service explained that funds raised from the scheme were ringfenced and could not be used for any other purpose. There had been an overspend of £93,804, largely due to year on year pay rises and the fixed prices of the licenses. This had been covered by service budgets.

The Chair invited members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the presentation and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:

Councillor Carter commented that it had been useful to her about the benefits of the scheme but requested more information about the challenges in areas such as Masbrough, where high failure rates had remained. Councillor Carter also requested further information on staff shortages and data limitation.

In response, the Head of Service commented that the service had worked closely with performance colleagues throughout the scheme to look at opportunities for the collection of data. However, because the scheme had been declared on the indices of deprivation, only deprivation information could be used to track and monitor progress, and arguably, the condition of properties had little tangible impact on rates of employment.

With regard to staff shortages, the Head of Service explained that there had been a turnover of staff mid-way through the scheme and this had left a gap in staffing which had been addressed during the second half of the scheme. Existing staff had been upskilled and re-trained and were able to carry out inspections. The Head of Service shared Councillor Carter's disappointment with the high failure rate in some areas and expressed frustration that certain landlords had not stepped up to their responsibilities.

Councillor Thorp commented on the impressive figures within the presentation but queried what had actually been achieved? Had properties been re-inspected once faults had been found to check that the required works had actually been carried out and properties maintained to the required standard?

In response, the Head of Service explained that where a Category 1

failure had been identified, a re-inspection had to be carried out to ensure that the property was safe. Whilst the ambition had been to reinspect all properties, it had not been possible to carry out re-inspections of all Category 2 failures due to time pressures and restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic. Where a property had been found to be good on initial inspection, it was only re-inspected if there had been a change of landlord or an issue reported by a tenant. The Head of Service offered to obtain specific re-inspection figures to share with Councillor Thorp.

The Chair asked if there had been a timeline for rectifying Category 1 hazards. The Head of Service explained that a Category 1 hazard would have led to an emergency prohibition order, meaning that the property could not be let until the landlord had rectified the issue. The timescales for dealing with such issues depended on each landlord.

Councillor Jackson congratulated the Head of Service on the work done uncovering 311 cannabis cultivations, which had supported the work of South Yorkshire Police on "Operation Grow". Councillor Jackson asked what would be done when a cannabis cultivation was found, a prohibition notice served and the property left long-term empty? Would the service work with the Empty Homes Team and what would the consequences be for the landlord?

The Head of Service confirmed that service would work with the Empty Homes team and would use whatever legislative powers they could – whether criminal or civil – to pursue the landlord, although there could be challenges in linking the landlord to the illegal operation if they had no knowledge of it. The Head of Service commented that a point of learning from this scheme had been that stricter licence conditions could be incorporated and legislation utilised to obtain closure orders and banning notices. The licence conditions had been set at the very start of the scheme and the service planned to review and develop the conditions before the start of any further scheme.

Councillor Tinsley commented on the compressed timescale of the scheme due to Covid and asked if agency workers and contractors had been used to catch up with the backlog of inspections? The Head of Service confirmed that towards the end of the scheme, it had become necessary to engage some agency workers to ensure that all inspections were completed on time.

In response to a further question from Councillor Tinsley as to whether the standard of inspections carried out by agency workers had been checked, the Head of Service confirmed that a quality assurance process had been carried out by a principal practitioner. The service had found that the agency inspectors were experienced and able to carry out their inspections relatively quickly as they had been organised in batches according to geographical proximity.

Councillor Tinsley asked whether, since the scheme ended in April 2025,

information had been shared with tenants and communities to let them know who to contact with any issues with their properties? The Head of Service confirmed that work had been done with the Neighbourhood teams and communication distributed via briefings, newsletters and on social media setting out contacts for housing issues.

Councillor Allen asked the Head of Service if further information regarding the NHS costs savings calculator could be shared, which the Head of Service confirmed she would provide. Councillor Allen also asked what happened to residents when an emergency prohibition notice was issued? The Head of Service explained that when a property had been deemed unsafe to live in, the residents would be effectively rendered short-term homeless whilst repairs took place. If they had no alternative accommodation, the Council would take the usual steps via the Homeless team to assist with providing short-term accommodation.

Councillor Jones raised concerns regarding the enforcement failures within the Masbrough area. Councillor Jones felt that the service had underestimated the amount of properties in that area that were licensed and as a result had under resourced. Councillor Jones commented that the community in Masbrough was a very transient community with a large proportion of terraced housing stock which would struggle to meet the upcoming enhanced EPC requirements for rented properties. How could landlords be supported with this? Councillor Jones stated that he would like to see conditions requiring landlords to routinely visit and inspect their properties incorporated into licences. Councillor Jones had heard reports that certain landlords were under the impression that once their licence had been granted, they had five years' grace, in which time Category 2 hazards could easily turn into Category 1 hazards.

The Head of Service emphasised that one area of learning from the previous scheme had been that changes cannot be made by inspections alone. Long-term behavioural change was required and could only be achieved via a joining up of services working together to make improvements. The Head of Service agreed that improving EPC ratings would be very challenging for landlords in certain areas. The Council would be keen to work with landlords to try and provide help and support with this.

The Chair asked whether, without the Covid interruptions, the plan had been to revisit all properties within the 5 year timescale? The Head of Service confirmed that it had been the ambition to revisit all properties, but not 100% of properties.

Councillor Thorp questioned how the service had determined that the scheme had been a success? The Head of Service explained that were the scheme to be measured on what the areas had been declared on – deprivation – the answer would be that it hadn't been a success as these areas were still deprived. However, many hazards had been identified, properties had been made safer, failing landlords had been prosecuted –

and these were all measures of success. The Head of Service commented that without the scheme, the Council would not have known about many of these issues and many families would be living in much worse conditions. The Head of Service acknowledged that the scheme had not been as successful as hoped, largely due to the restrictions imposed by Covid, but stated that many lessons had been learnt for the service to take forward.

The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment commented that 292 properties had Category 1 hazards removed from them, which was a sign of success. The fact that some parts of the borough would no longer be proposed to be part of any future scheme, could also be considered a sign of success.

Councillor Thorp asked whether landlords with multiple properties had more issues, compared to landlords with only one or two properties. The Head of Service commented that landlords with multiple properties had often engaged managing agents and operated in more of a professional space so generally, had less issues.

Resolved:-

That the contents of the presentation providing a Review of Selective Licensing 2020-2025 be noted.

23. PLAN FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS 2025-2035

At the Chair's invitation, the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs & the Local Economy, Councillor Williams, introduced the update presentation and explained that the Plan for Neighbourhoods was a rebranding by the current government of the former Long Term Plan for Towns - the funding and the geographical areas under consideration remained the same. The Plan was part of the government's wider strategy for ensuring that no area was left behind and to help revitalise local areas to fight deprivation. Councillor Williams explained that there were three specific goals identified by the plan, namely:-

- Thriving neighbourhoods;
- Stronger communities; and
- Giving residents more control.

Councillor Williams confirmed the funding available to be £20 million over 10 years. Careful thought would need to be given as to how best to spend this significant amount of funding to provide maximum impact for neighbourhoods. At the heart of Rotherham's plan for this funding is the town centre and outlying urban areas of deprivation. The areas to be included in the Plan for Neighbourhoods had been determined by a government analysis of urban features.

Councillor Williams encouraged members, when considering the Plan for

Neighbourhoods, to avoid zoning in on their immediate areas of interest in their specific wards, but to consider the boundary of the area within the plan as one entity and community for the benefit of the whole Borough. The focus of Rotherham's Plan for Neighbourhoods would be supporting and strengthening communities identified from the inside and building up the offer in the town centre to serve those communities and beyond.

Councillor Williams explained that the allocation of the funding would be led by the Neighbourhood Board, in consultation with the community. Extensive consultation had been undertaken under the Long Term Plan for Towns and this would be continued into the Plan for Neighbourhoods. The Council's key role would be as the accountable body for this funding.

Megan Hinchliff, Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager, gave a presentation on the Plan for Neighbourhoods which covered the following points and issues:

- A timeline of the Regeneration Programme from 2017 onwards, with details of specific projects and their funding streams. This demonstrated how Rotherham had been successful in securing and channelling regeneration funding.
- An explanation that the fund aimed to focus on neighbourhoods and communities with the most need, with the emphasis on social cohesion and social connection, raising living standards and increasing opportunities for young people. This would be a place-based investment approach, tackling all areas of life.
- An explanation of the area prescribed by the Government to benefit from this funding – the “built up area” – and how the boundaries had been determined, using data from the Office of National Statistics.
- An explanation that the map provided within the presentation had been provided by the government and the boundaries on it were not sufficiently clear. The service would look to redraw the map and make it more readable for publishing. The boundaries incorporate a number of communities which immediately surround the usual town centre footprint. How exactly the funding would be spent would be determined by the Neighbourhood Board but the overarching theme would be that it should be for the benefit of the whole borough.
- Details of the consultation process carried out to date and confirmation that the work and evidence gathered over the lifetime of the Long Term Plans for Towns scheme would be used and further built upon over the next 10 years of the Plan for Neighbourhoods scheme. The most recent consultation completed on 11 August 2025 and service had evaluated the data.
- An examination of the key themes which came out of the

consultation undertaken in 2024 and 2025. This had been based on the Place Standard Tool methodology, whereby neighbourhoods and places were evaluated using 14 themes and participants provided a score between 1 and 7 – with 1 being low and 7, high. The Council partnered with Voluntary Action Rotherham, who led on the stakeholder consultation with communities. This consultation had led to the identification of the top 5 areas of priority, namely:-

1. Influence and sense of control – residents don't feel listened to;
2. Feeling safe – concern about anti-social behaviour;
3. Care & Maintenance;
4. Traffic & Parking; and
5. Work & Local Economy

This feedback together with the Government data would inform where the funding should be allocated. Interventions would be prioritised where they had clear collective benefits and met the needs of the geographical areas as a whole.

- More information on the make-up of the Neighbourhood Board, which would be required to lead on the fund. The Board would aim to put local people at the centre of defining the area's future so would need to bring together, for example: residents; local businesses; grassroots campaigners; workplace representatives; faith and community leaders; and those with a deep connection to their area. There would also be a number of statutory members, which would include the local MP, two ward members and a representative from South Yorkshire Police.
- A timeline of key dates moving forward. The plan would be taken to Cabinet on 17th November 2025, prior to the deadline to submit a Regeneration Plan to MHCLG on 28th November 2025. The first tranche of funding would be due from April 2026.

The Chair invited members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the presentation and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:

Councillor Allen expressed her disappointment that her previously minuted request at the IPSC meeting on 8th July 2025 had not been fulfilled. She had wanted an overview of how the different regeneration and funding streams fit together like a jigsaw to provide a cohesive approach. However, she felt like she had just been provided with a list. The Chair agreed and informed the Commission that he had reminded officers of Councillor Allen's request when papers were submitted, but due to timings had not been able to check if the response was sufficient before publication.

In response, Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director for Regeneration and

Environment, apologised that the information provided had not delivered what Councillor Allen had requested and explained that with many different, disparate programmes, it was difficult to present a coherent pattern. However, he assured Councillor Allen that service would work on providing something that addressed the issues she had raised.

Councillor Allen also expressed concern over the potential make-up of the Neighbourhood Board and the challenge of ensuring that the board would be made up of people who are deeply connected to their areas. Councillor Allen felt that there was a risk of the voices of the communities competing with each other and getting lost and that the Neighbourhood Board could end up being more of the same, from the same people.

In response, the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment agreed that it would be challenging to ensure the correct balance on the Neighbourhood Board of voices from those who are deeply connected to the borough and the communities within the area. Particularly when there was a level of prescription from the government in terms of geography and the requirement for statutory members. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment confirmed that service are hoping to involve the voluntary community sector to tap into wider contacts.

Simon Moss, Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration & Transport, commented that he felt that this programme did feel different and not just more of the same. The ethos of the scheme was not just regeneration and capital but up to 25% of the funding could be used for revenue, which would bring in a different range of potential activities. The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager emphasised that the Council was aware of the risks with Neighbourhood Board and would work closely with the Chair of the Board to curate an appropriate membership and make sure that it represented the priorities that the community had set. Upon further questioning, officers clarified that no Chair of the Board had yet been appointed.

The Chair asked whether the Neighbourhood Board of 20 members would be made up of entirely new members and replace the current Town Deal board? The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager clarified that the advice from the government had been utilise the existing Town Board in order to get moving with the plan but that this should evolve into an appropriate Neighbourhood Board. The Town Board would continue with its functions of overseeing the Pathfinder programme.

The Chair asked if there were any restrictions imposed on how the £20 million over 10 years could be spent – would it have to be spread across the years or could it be spent in chunks or even all at once? The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager confirmed that the Council would have flexibility to set the spending profile over the 10 years.

Councillor Thorp expressed frustration with the consultation process and that the lowest score (and therefore highest priority theme) on the

consultation had been that residents don't feel listened to. Councillor Thorp commented that this was a common outcome of every consultation and was of the opinion that questions are presented to residents in a way that makes it difficult for them to respond openly.

IPSC Co-optee, Mrs. M. Jacques, shared her personal experience of taking part in the consultation and felt that it had asked what residents wanted to see or what was lacking in their neighbourhoods. The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager commented that the consultation had been an open consultation based around themes, with no leading questions.

Councillor Thorp also expressed disappointment with the focus on the town centre. Councillor Thorp felt that, whilst part of his ward comes within the boundary of the scheme, it would be unlikely to feel any benefit from the funding.

In response, the Cabinet Member reminded members that the geography of the boundaries of the Neighbourhood Plan area had been set by the government. He encouraged members to take a holistic approach and stressed that whilst the physical interventions might be in a specific area, they must be for the benefit of the whole borough, so that people who come into the town centre from other areas, also feel that benefit.

Councillor Jones commented that he agreed with Councillor Allen's concerns regarding the potentially predictable make-up of the Neighbourhood Board and the potential for duplication.

Councillor Sheppard commented that it was positive to receive funds that could be spent flexibly and queried whether the funds could be used as an enabler for projects that could attract other streams of funding. He further commented that it would be good if members of wards within the scheme boundaries could interact with the Neighbourhood Board to put schemes forward that match their local priorities. This may enable match funding with the capital award budgets that could help smaller schemes to get more help. The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager confirmed that the scheme encouraged the Council to attract match funding for this programme and that it could work the other way in terms of matching other funding.

The Chair asked whether the Neighbourhood Board would decide on the ambitions of the plan and whether this would be a single ambition or lots of smaller ones. The Regeneration Programme & Strategy Manager commented that it would be difficult to confirm at that point in time, but that the key areas of intervention that had been identified were youth provisions and tackling health inequality. The detail would be worked out with the Neighbourhood Board, once in place.

The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment proposed that this item be brought back to IPSC's October meeting to provide members

with further opportunity to contribute to the development of plans prior to submission to the government in November, and to facilitate further regarding the appropriate membership of the Neighbourhood Board. Members agreed with this suggestion.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the contents of the presentation on the Plan for Neighbourhoods 2025-2035 be noted;
- (2) That Councillor Allen's previously minuted request (at Minute 16 of the Improving Places Select Commission meeting held on 8 July 2025) for a detailed analysis of how the various different regeneration plans and funding streams fit and dovetail together to create a whole borough approach, be provided;
- (3) That Improving Places Select Commission receives a further update on the Plan for Neighbourhoods 2025-2030 at the meeting on 21 October 2025, to further explore point 2 above and to receive further information on the potential make-up of the Neighbourhood Board; and
- (4) That Improving Places Select Commission be given further opportunity to review and comment on the Plan for Neighbourhoods 2025-2035 at the meeting on 21 October 2025, prior to a spending proposal being submitted to Cabinet in November 2025.

24. IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - WORK PROGRAMME 2025 - 2026

The Chair introduced the work programme report and noted the following –

School Road Safety Review Update

- The Chair confirmed that with the arrival of new Governance Advisor, Kristianne Thorogood, who would be supporting the Improving Lives Select Commission going forward and taking over from Barbel Gale, she would be in touch with members of the panel for this review to re-start the process.
- Councillor Thorp queried whether this would be the start of a new review of whether it was a continuation of the review which had started but then paused.
- The Chair confirmed that it would be a continuation of the review which had been started but that it had paused due to considerations as to potential cross-over with a Cabinet review on a similar road safety issue. The scoping of both reviews had now been clarified and work can proceed on the IPSC review.

Councillor Allen proposed that, following mention of the proposed Bassingthorpe Farm housing development and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in the Housing Strategy item, it would be worthwhile for IPSC to be given the opportunity to scrutinise these plans, particularly in the context of the lessons that have been learnt from the other recent large scale housing development project within the borough at Waverley.

Councillor Allen also suggested that IPSC members consider a future visit to the Bassingthorpe Farm site, along with any other places of interest to the Commission in the borough. She mentioned that the Planning Board would be carrying out a full day of site visits later in September and felt that a similar trip would be of benefit to IPSC members.

The Chair confirmed that the Bassingthorpe SPD was due to go to Cabinet on 15 September 2025 for adoption. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment, commented that whilst Cabinet were due to consider the SPD later in September, it would be a very long term development for the borough and there would be plenty of opportunity for IPSC to scrutinise and shape the plans for the site as they develop further.

The Chair supported Councillor Allen's suggestion that the Bassingthorpe Farm development be looked at further by IPSC, particularly with the Waverley connection, and was also supportive of the suggestion that potential site visits were considered. The Chair mentioned as other possible sites/visits of interest – the construction of the new library and a visit to see the new grass cutting equipment in action. The Chair invited other members to put forward any further suggestions they had for potential site visits for consideration.

The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment, suggested that the Bassingthorpe Farm development would be a good item for a future dedicated Workshop for IPSC. The Chair and members agreed and the timing and scoping of this Workshop would be considered further.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the update on the Work Programme be received and noted;
- (2) That the Governance Advisor be authorised to make any required changes to the work programme in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair and reporting any such changes back at the next meeting for endorsement;
- (3) That Councillor Allen's suggestion that IPSC conduct site visits to key developments, such as the proposed housing development at Bassingthorpe Farm, be considered and taken forward into the IPSC work programme, in collaboration with Officers; and
- (4) That a potential workshop for IPSC be considered on the

Bassingthorpe Farm development, to be delivered by Officers at a time and date to be agreed, after the Supplementary Planning Document has gone before Cabinet on 15th September 2025.

25. URGENT BUSINESS

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