

Public Report
Improving Places Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 27 January 2026

Report Title

Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2024/25

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

Judith Badger, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Report Author(s)

Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Progress on the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working Model

Recommendations

That the Select Commission note the progress of the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working Model

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy

Appendix 2 – Neighbourhoods Performance Indicators

Appendix 3 – Ward Priorities summary (2024-26)

Background Papers

- Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy 2018-2025
- Rotherham Council Plan 2025-2030: Forging Ahead
- Rotherham Council Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2025/26
- Refresh of Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy cabinet report – 21 November 2022

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2024/25

1. Background

- 1.1 This annual report primarily focuses on the municipal year May 2024 to May 2025 but also provides a summary of any significant activity up to and including December 2025.
- 1.2 Cabinet approved the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy (2018-2025) in November 2018 following the introduction of the new neighbourhood working model in May 2017. The Strategy was refreshed and agreed by Cabinet in November 2022 (see Appendix 1). An updated Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy is due to be produced in 2026.
- 1.3 The Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy aims to achieve –
 - Neighbourhoods that are safe and welcoming with good community spirit.
 - Residents are happy, healthy and loving where they live.
 - Residents have the opportunity to use their strengths, knowledge and skills to achieve what is important to them.
- 1.4 This Strategy helps to deliver the Council's vision under the 'Places are Thriving, Safe and Clean' strategic outcome within the Council Plan (2025-30) - *'Our people and neighbourhoods are important to us and are at the heart of everything we do. Through the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, we have already come a long way, and we continue to work with local people to find solutions to local issues, building on our heritage and assets. Alongside this, we are delivering events and activities that bring people together, reducing social isolation and enabling people to have an active cultural life. This is a crucial part of transforming our communities, creating a sense of cohesion, belonging and pride.'*
- 1.5 The 'Places are Thriving, Safe and Clean' theme within the Council's Year Ahead Delivery Plan includes the following priorities that the Council will focus on in 2025/26 –
 - Helping people to feel safe in their community.
 - Creating vibrant communities – which includes specific activity relating to the delivery of ward plans and the refresh of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy.
 - Better public places.
 - Revitalising the Town Centre.
- 1.6 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report, which was presented to cabinet in September 2023, provided positive feedback on the Council's neighbourhood working model stating – *'The Council's Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy aspires to strengthen the role of ward members as community leaders who can work with their communities, their partners and those delivering service in communities to bring about the changes that communities want to see. The peer team was impressed by the exemplary approach to community engagement at ward level, where dedicated and well-supported Ward Members take the lead.'*

2. Key Issues

Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy

- 2.1 A refreshed version of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy (2018-2025) was approved by Cabinet in November 2022 (see Appendix 1). An updated Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy is due to be produced in 2026.
- 2.2 Delivery of the Strategy is done so via the 25 ward plans. Elected Members and the Neighbourhoods Teams review and update these plans on a monthly basis. Elected Members present ward reports to Council to illustrate progress against their ward priorities. The latest cycle of reports to Council commenced in July 2025.
- 2.3 A range of Neighbourhoods Team Performance Indicators are recorded throughout the year. The figures from 2021 – 2025 are attached as Appendix 2. Performance and impact are also captured through case studies and stories, that are included in the Members' ward reports, ward e-bulletins and other media channels.

Elected Members as Community Leaders

- 2.4 Elected Members are at the centre of Rotherham's Neighbourhood Working Model, which supports them to maximise their role as community leaders.

Member Development and Support

- 2.5 Elected Members are supported on a day-to-day basis by the Neighbourhoods Team. During 2024/25 the Neighbourhoods Team facilitated 247 ward member briefings. These ward briefings are fundamental to the neighbourhood working model as they provide Members with the opportunity to review their ward priorities, plans and budgets, engage with various partners and services, consider any emerging issues, take a lead on any projects or initiatives, and discuss how to involve and work with the local community.
- 2.6 Following the May 2024 elections new and returning Members were provided with a ward focused induction by the Neighbourhoods Team. The ward induction complemented the wider Corporate Member Induction Programme.

Ward Priorities and Plans

- 2.7 Following the May 2024 elections and the completion of the ward inductions, the Neighbourhoods Team supported new and returning Elected Members in the identification of their new ward priorities. Members were provided with ward data, input and advice from council services and partners and local community intelligence, including the results from any recent consultation exercises. The new ward priorities were published on the Council's website in October 2024. A summary is included as Appendix 3.
- 2.8 Elected Members continue to work with a range of council services, local communities and numerous partners to develop projects and improve local

services to tackle their ward priorities. Details of this activity is captured in the individual ward plans, included in the monthly ward e-bulletins and summarised in Ward Members' reports to full Council.

- 2.9 The Elected Members' reports to Council include numerous stories and case studies, illustrating the impact of neighbourhood working, their role as community leaders and progress on ward priorities. The latest cycle of reports to Council commenced in July 2025. All ward reports are published on the ward webpages once presented.
- 2.10 As well as forming the basis for local action, the ward priorities and plans are used to inform Council decision making - the Council Plan, policies, strategies, service plans and resource allocation.

Devolved Ward Budgets

- 2.11 In 2024/25 Elected Members had access to the following devolved ward budgets -
 - Community Leadership Fund (CLF) - £1,584 per individual Elected Member (revenue). A total budget of £93,456.
 - Ward Capital Budget - £7,120 for two member wards £10,680 for three member wards. A total budget of £210,040.
 - Ward Housing Budget (WHB) - £4,000 base budget for each ward with an enhancement dependent upon the number of Council homes in the ward. A total budget of £216,000.
 - Local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – 15% of the total CIL paid to the Council retained in any ward not covered by a Parish Council. The budget available to Elected Members is dependent on the level of development in the ward, land values and the payment schedules. At the beginning of 2024/25 £518,794 of Neighbourhood CIL was available to 11 of the non-parished wards.
 - In 2024/25 a total of £1,038,290 was available for Elected Members to spend in their wards.

	Budget	Spent	Balance
CLF	£93,456	£56,184	£37,272
Capital	£210,040	£55,003	£155,037
WHB	£216,000	£77,565	£138,435
CIL	£518,794	£86,364	£432,430
Total	£1,038,290	£275,116	£763,174

- 2.12 CLF and Ward Capital Budgets –
 - These budgets have a roll forward provision, with any funding unallocated in a specific year rolling forward into the following year, up to 2027/28.
 - In 2024/25 Elected Members allocated £111,187 to projects, services and activities tackling their ward priorities. £56,184 from CLF and £55,003 from the Ward Capital Budget.

2.13 Ward Housing Budget –

- The £216,000 annual Ward Housing Budget is made available each year to support projects and investments around our council housing estates, to address ward priorities and issues of concern for council tenants and residents.
- The budget had previously been administered by the Housing & Estates Service. Administration of the budget moved to the Neighbourhoods Team in 2024/25 to better align with CLF and Ward Capital Budgets.
- This budget also has a roll forward provision, with any funding unallocated in a specific year rolling forward into the following year, up to 2027/28.
- During 2024/25 a total of £77,565 was allocated to support the delivery of local projects that directly benefitted council tenants.

2.14 Community Infrastructure Levy –

- A charge that Councils can apply to new developments to raise funds for local infrastructure.
- Wards that are not covered by a Parish Council retain the Local CIL or ‘Neighbourhood Portion’. This equates to 15% of the total CIL.
- The budget available to Elected Members is dependent on the level of development in the ward, land values and the payment schedules. There is no deadline to spend CIL monies.
- CIL has been made available to Elected Members in non-parished wards since April 2022.
- At the beginning of 2024/25 £518,794 of Neighbourhood CIL was available to 11 of the non-parished wards. During 2024/25 a total of £86,364 was allocated to support the delivery of local projects. *Note – this includes £15,590 that was spent at the end of 2023/24 which wasn't included in the last annual report.*

2.15 £62,371 (23%) of the devolved budgets was invested directly into the Voluntary and Community Sector, supporting a total of 160 community organisations. £97,038 (35%) went into the public sector for additional activities, services or equipment. The remaining £115,706 (42%) was used to purchase items/equipment from the private sector to improve community assets and or support community activities, such as play equipment.

2.16 In total, Elected Members allocated £275,116 on projects and services in line with their ward priorities during 2024/25. This figure is lower than previous years but was expected given that Members were only elected in May 2024 and ward priorities only confirmed in October 2024. The remaining £763,174 was carried over into the next financial year. Summaries of the allocations made in each individual ward in 2024/25 were published on the Council website in May 2025.

Communication and Community Engagement

2.17 How both Elected Members and the Neighbourhoods Team communicate and engage with residents, stakeholders and partners is fundamental to Rotherham’s neighbourhood working model. Communication & Engagement is embedded in the delivery of the ward plans.

2.18 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report (September 2023) stated that – *'The peer team was impressed by the exemplary approach to community engagement at ward level, where dedicated and well-supported Ward Members take the lead'.*

Website

2.19 The Neighbourhoods home webpage includes information on the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, an interactive map of all the wards, details on how to apply for devolved ward budgets, links to the Parish Councils section of the Council website and links to all 25 ward pages. In 2024/25 there were 4,826 unique views of this webpage.

2.20 The 25 ward webpages include Elected Members details, a link to subscribe to the ward e-bulletin, and useful links to other websites. They also allow people to access the ward priorities, ward data profile, annual ward budget statements and the Elected Members' report to Council. Due to unresolvable software issues it was decided to remove the 'latest news' section from the ward pages and simply sign post readers to subscribe to the ward e-bulletin.

Ward E-bulletins

2.21 Each ward produces and circulates a monthly e-bulletin. The wards that cover Rawmarsh, Swinton and Maltby & Hellaby issue a joint e-bulletin. These are written in consultation with Elected Members and provide local information and numerous stories illustrating the progress made in tackling ward priorities and the impact of neighbourhood working within the ward.

2.22 At the end of 2024/25 there were 11,829 subscribers to the ward e-bulletins. There was a small increase of 230 subscribers over the year. This increase is significantly less than in previous years. A number of people subscribe to multiple ward e-bulletins. Therefore, 18,497 ward e-bulletins are received by subscribers each month.

2.23 241 editions were issued throughout the year. The engagement rate (the percentage of bulletins opened and read) is 76%. A high rate considering the number of ward e-bulletins issued. This appears to indicate that the content is of interest and useful to the reader.

2.24 In Spring 2025 the Communications Team initiated a review to check the accuracy of the subscription figures. This identified that a number of the subscribers previously recorded had not indicated a ward preference and had, therefore, not been receiving any e-bulletins. These individuals have been contacted periodically over the last 6 months to encourage them to select a ward e-bulletin to receive. Those that have chosen not to do this will be removed from the subscribers list. Therefore, the 2025/26 subscription figures will be less than previous years.

2.25 In 2026 the Neighbourhoods and Communications Teams will be conducting a survey with e-bulletin readers to find out what they like about the e-bulletins and

how they think they could be improved. This will be followed by another campaign to increase subscribers.

Supporting Community Organisations

- 2.26 Supporting local community groups who run activities and services that help tackle ward priorities, is a core function of the Neighbourhoods Team.
- 2.27 In 2024/25, the Team supported community organisations 462 times with general advice, funding, volunteer recruitment and linking them into various partnerships and services. This figure includes the establishment of 12 new community organisations. This work was alongside and in addition to, the ward budget funding which was awarded to 160 community organisations.

Community Events

- 2.28 The Neighbourhoods Team continue to work alongside Elected Members to bring communities together through a range of enjoyable, cultural and social activities and events, which inspire hope and pride in local communities across the Borough. 316 community events were arranged or supported by the Team in 2024/25.

Consultation

- 2.29 The Neighbourhoods Team continue to advise and support Council services and partners who wish to consult within wards and neighbourhoods, such as the Our Places programme. This is in accordance with the Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework.
- 2.30 Elected Members in some wards initiated a consultation exercise in summer 2024 that informed their ward priorities and plans.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 2.31 The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy emphasises the need to promote and provide opportunities for all communities within the Borough. In 2024/25, Elected Members and the Neighbourhoods Team supported 232 activities, projects or initiatives that promoted communities with protected characteristics. These include consultation exercises, support/funding for community groups and community events.
- 2.32 Following the violent disorder at the Holiday Inn at Manvers in August 2024 the Council increased its commitment to promote community cohesion. Ward Members and the Neighbourhoods Team have contributed to this by –
 - Including community cohesion activity within ward priorities and plans and supporting local activities, projects and events through ward funding;
 - Supporting the delivery of projects, activities and events funded via the Community Recovery Fund and ensuring they are linked into local community organisations and residents; and
 - Specific support for Manvers Residents Association and the local community.

2.33 Over the next 12 months the Neighbourhoods Team will continue to work with Elected Members on community cohesion projects and provide more opportunities for communities with protected characteristics to get involved in local consultation, activities and co-produced community action.

Partnership Working

Ward Priorities

2.34 The priorities within ward plans form the basis of local projects, partnerships and networks which are supported by the Neighbourhoods Team and Elected Members. These priorities are shared across all Council services and partner agencies to help inform strategies, service plans, the allocation of resources and the delivery of services. A summary of the ward priorities is included as Appendix 3.

2.35 Work continues to increase the visibility of the ward priorities to all staff across the council. This included ward priorities being considered during the development of the new Council Plan, service planning and strategy development. In addition, the priorities are included in regular discussions with various management teams across the council and an annual programme of neighbourhood tours is available to all staff.

Neighbourhood Partnerships and Networks

2.36 A range of neighbourhood-based partnerships and networks have continued to meet or have been established in order to tackle the priorities within the ward plans. This includes the Community Action Partnerships (CAPs) which operate in all 25 wards and provide a vehicle to tackle community safety related issues.

2.37 In 2025/26 the Neighbourhoods Team co-ordinated 618 neighbourhood partnership and network meetings. These have been a mix of in-person and online Teams meetings.

Parish and Town Councils

2.38 Parish and Town Councils are key to local partnership and neighbourhood working. The Parish Council & Neighbourhoods Liaison Officer is a fairly unique post and illustrates the importance the Council places on these positive relationships. A number of the Parish Councils recognise this as a model of good practice.

2.39 Over the last year the Parish Council Liaison Officer has worked alongside the Parish Councils to –

- Monitor and promote the Joint Working Agreement with the Council;
- Meet with each other, council services and partners on a regular basis;
- Link into Elected Members and key council services to address local issues;
- Develop their response to potential future flood or emergency incidents;
- Hold events and celebrations – including early preparation with council services for events such as Remembrance Sunday;

- Recruit Parish Council representatives to various Boards and Group, such as the Transport Advisory Group; and
- Access learning and development opportunities.

2.40 The Parish Council & Neighbourhoods Liaison Officer co-ordinates the Parish Council and RMBC Joint Working Group, Parish Council Network events, Clerks meetings and joint learning and development sessions. During 2024/25, 25 of the 31 Parish and Town Councils in Rotherham were involved in one or more of these meetings and events.

2.41 The Parish Council & Neighbourhoods Liaison Officer also engages with those that have chosen not to get involved in any of the joint meetings or events, via the Parish Councils' e-bulletin, attending their meetings or individual discussions with the clerk.

Integrated Locality Working

Rotherham Town Centre

2.42 The Neighbourhoods Team has the lead role in promoting a placemaking approach within Rotherham town centre by bringing all key stakeholders together to achieve common goals and ensure the town centre becomes a desirable place to live, work and visit.

2.43 The Town Centre Community Co-ordinator is an integral link between those involved in the economic regeneration of the town centre, various council services, local businesses, the VCS, residents and visitors. The performance figures attached as Appendix 2 illustrate that ASB, Community Safety and Street Scene related issues is where the majority of the demand lies, followed by support for businesses, events, community engagement and regeneration projects.

2.44 Particular achievements for the Town Centre Community Co-ordinator during 2024/25 include –

- Forge Island - relationships with Travelodge and ARC Cinema, Vetro Lounge, Sygnature Dish and Heavenly Desserts and early identification of any emerging site related issues.
- Riverside Gardens / Corporation Street - engaging with businesses impacted by the ongoing works.
- Supporting new and existing local businesses - providing advice, support and signposting and encouraging working together to maximise footfall and opportunities.
- Vacant buildings – meetings with potential investors who are interested in some of the long-term empty buildings and signposting to specialist advice.
- Events - working with businesses and council services, before, during and after the events
- Community Safety & Street Scene – involved in recruitment and induction of new Street Safe team and lead on weekly partnership walkabouts with council services and partners.

2.45 The Town Centre Strategic Group, chaired by the Service Director for Regeneration & Environment, has recently led on the production of a new Town Centre Action Plan (2025-2030). The Action Plan pulls together and steers work relating to the town centre. The actions are organised thematically and demonstrates how services and partner are working collectively to achieve the desired objectives. These themes are -

- Placemaking
- Connectivity
- Housing & Communities
- Services & Facilities
- Safety & Street Scene
- Culture & Leisure
- Business Support & Growth
- Marketing & Communications

2.46 The Town Centre Operational Group meets on a monthly basis to ensure there is joint-working and co-ordination of services and partners in the town centre. The Operational Group will progress the actions identified in the Town Centre Action Plan.

2.47 Pride in Place (previously known as Plan for Neighbourhoods) is a Government programme that will benefit the Town Centre and surrounding communities. The programme provides £20m funding over 10 years from April 2026. Over the last 12 months consultation has taken place to inform an Investment Plan, which has included consideration of ward priorities. The Plan was agreed by cabinet in November and has now been submitted to Government for a final decision. The Plan includes proposals for investment around –

- Regeneration, High Streets & Heritage
- Safety & Security
- Education & Opportunity
- Cohesion
- Health & Wellbeing
- Work, Productivity & Skills

A new Neighbourhoods Board will be established to oversee delivery of the Plan. Phase 2 of the Pride in Place programme will cover Maltby East ward. Work on developing the investment plan for that area will commence in 2026.

Locality Working Board

2.48 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report (2023) included a recommendation to '*Develop a clearer and shared understanding of integrated locality working*' and suggested that '*Integrated locality working through increased co-design and co-production of solutions and services alongside partner organisations can deliver enhanced outcomes for residents through improved services and solutions which are tailored to their needs.*'

2.49 In response to this a Locality Working Board made of senior council officers from across the Council, South Yorkshire Police and the NHS was established

in June 2024. The Board is responsible for embedding integrated locality working within the Council and with partners, with a specific focus on -

- Collaborative problem-solving to tackle community safety, crime & ASB and street scene.
- Family Hubs are integrated into wider neighbourhood / locality working.
- Promotion of Prevention and early intervention to tackle Health Inequalities.

2.50 The Board has formalised the role and function of the North, Central and South Locality Managers Groups, which comprise of area managers from council services and partners that deliver on that particular footprint - such as Neighbourhoods, Housing, Environmental Enforcement, Community Protection Unit, Street Scene, Early Help, Adult Care and South Yorkshire Police. The Groups are responsible for identifying and maximising opportunities to connect and integrate public sector and VCS service delivery across the North, Central or South Locality Area, in line with the ambitions set out in the Council Plan, the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the ward priorities. Going forward the Locality Managers Groups will oversee the delivery of the Selective Licensing Neighbourhood Improvement Plans.

2.51 Over 2024/25 other specific activity that the Board have initiated includes -

- Neighbourhood tours for council staff;
- Embedding a Strengths-Based Working approach within the Council via training and development and the establishment of a Community of Practice;
- Ensuring ward priorities inform service delivery;
- Establishing and promoting a ward directory of key contacts; and
- Championing improvements to the Council's approach to consultation and engagement.

2.52 National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme – Rotherham was recently successful in its bid to be part of this national change programme to make early progress on neighbourhood health delivery, as set out in the NHS 10-year plan. This is an exciting opportunity to deliver more integrated and accessible health services within communities by building on existing locality and neighbourhood working models and service delivery.

3 Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The report presented is for information.

4 Consultation on proposal

4.1 The report presented is for information.

5 Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The report presented is for information.

6 Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no financial and procurement implications, other than those relating to the Neighbourhoods core management budget and the Elected Members' ward budgets.

7 Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications.

8 Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct staffing implications other than the recruitment and deployment of Neighbourhoods staff.

9 Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The outcomes within the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working model supports the delivery of the Council Plan's strategic outcomes around 'Children & Young People Achieve' and 'Residents Live Well'

9.2 The ward priorities illustrate where Elected Members are targeting resources towards both Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults. This includes new or additional activities, improved facilities or improved access to services. The majority of the wards also have priorities which try to mitigate against the 'Cost-of-Living' crisis.

10 Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The neighbourhood working model enables the Council to respond to the specific needs of Rotherham's increasingly diverse communities. Engagement with residents takes into account the strengths, assets and needs of different communities of interest, which differ in each neighbourhood and ward. Neighbourhood working allows the flexibility to respond to these needs.

10.2 The ward priorities and ward budget statements published on the website illustrate how Elected Members have targeted activity, services and resources toward communities with protected characteristics. Case studies and stories on ward webpages, e-bulletins and the Ward Members' reports to Council illustrate the impact being made.

10.3 Over the next 12 months the Neighbourhoods Team will continue to work with Elected Members on community cohesion projects and provide more opportunities for communities with protected characteristics to get involved in local consultation, activities and co-produced community action.

11 Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 A number of ward priorities and plans have specific references to green initiatives, such as tree planting, wildflower meadows, recycling and active travel, that would positively contribute to tackling this agenda within these wards. The development of projects and awareness raising through e-bulletins and other engagement methods will encourage resident participation.

12 Implications for Partners

12.1 Multi-agency working is covered in paragraphs 2.34 to 2.52 of this report. This illustrates the importance of partners (from the public, voluntary and private sector) and Parish Councils in the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy. The ward priorities and plans are informed by the experience and intelligence from these partners, which encourages the establishment of shared priorities and goals.

13 Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Risks relating to the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy are captured in the Assistant Chief Executive Directorate Risk Register.

14 Accountable Officer(s)

Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Executive Director of Corporate Services	Judith Badger	05/12/25
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	05/12/25
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	05/12/25
Service Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).