

**THE CABINET
9th February, 2026**

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Baker-Rogers, Beresford, Cusworth, Marshall and Williams.

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

111. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

112. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 2 questions from Councillors:

1. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked why the proposed budget included a half price offer for over-65's to go swimming but the offer was not being extended to children?

The Leader stated that there were already a number of discount arrangements in place for a number of different groups, including older people and children. When analysing the figures, it was noted that there were particularly low numbers of older people using leisure facilities relative to the overall size of the population. As such, the proposal within the budget was for a pilot scheme to reduce the price of swimming for older people to see whether there was a price sensitivity. It was important for the Council to encourage older residents to either get active or remain active later in life.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester questioned whether all over-65's should be entitled to the discount. He stated that teenagers for example would not get free transport to leisure centres like over 65's would and would have to pay more. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if the additional Government funding was being used to carry favour with older residents as they were more likely to vote.

The Leader explained that there had been significant emphasis on young people across the agreed budgets for a number of years. The proposals for young people in the 2026/27 budget included additional youth work, the baby packs scheme, youth outreach buses and additional support for children and families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The Leader stated that it was important for the Council to be able to do things for older residents as well as younger residents.

2. Councillor Yasseen asked why the Leader believed that using public Council funds to purchase flags and flagpoles represented an appropriate or lawful use of Council resources when he had previously said that flags had been used to provoke division and potentially fuel hate within communities?

The Leader stated that it was important that people who believed in societies that were mixed and multi-ethnic were able to take ownership of the Union Flag or St George's Flag. Those flags were for everyone, and the Leader did not want them to be a sign of extremism, anti-immigration views or far right politics. Following the consultation run by the Council, it was clear that Rotherham residents wanted to see the Union Flag and St George's Flag across the Borough and it was important that this was done in the right way, from community buildings, and not on lampposts.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen asked what the total allocation was and what the allocation could actually be spent on? Could it be used for the Pride flag, the Ukrainian flag or Palestinian flag for example?

The Leader stated that he would provide a written response in terms of the total allocation. In terms of eligibility, the fund was only available to Parish Councils or community groups and could be used to fund a flagpole and national flag, up to the cost of £500. There would be no contractual arrangement with the council's or groups over what could be flown on the flagpole, however, the object of the grant funding was to make it more possible to support the flying of those 2 national flags in the spirit described.

113. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19th January, 2026, be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

114. 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 and public from the meeting.

115. LOCAL AUTHORITY BETTER CARE FUND 2025/26 - DISCHARGE GRANT COMMITMENTS

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the Local Authority Better Care Fund Discharge Grant. In January 2023, Central Government announced additional funding through a new £200m

Discharge Grant for Local Authorities. The Fund was intended to increase capacity in post-discharge care and support and improve discharge performance, patient safety, experience and outcomes.

From 2025/26, the grant had been included in the Local Authority Better Care Fund at the same level as the 2024/25 allocation which was £3,383,583 for Rotherham. However, in effect the Fund that was the Discharge Grant no longer existed. The ringfence for the grant had been removed but national conditions and use of the funding still needed to be reported through the Better Care Fund governance into the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England. This was executed through the Health and Wellbeing Board, Better Care Fund Partnership Agreement and Section 75. Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 enabled NHS bodies and local authorities to establish formal partnerships to pool budgets and resources, enabling joint commissioning and integrated Health and Social Care Services.

The report identified a number of Adult Social Care commitments that should continue to be delivered on a permanent basis due to the removal of the grant ringfence. The Schemes/Services were: S117 Mental Health Reviews; Provider Services; Integrated Discharge Team; Enablement Service; Continuing Healthcare; Mental Health; Quality and Contract Compliance and Adult Contact Team. Additional details were set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report. The Schemes would require a funding commitment of £838k in 2026/27 and £624k in 2027/28 on a recurrent basis. Provisions had been made available for this in the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

It was noted during the meeting that schemes being funded were ongoing schemes and the purpose of the report was to ensure that they continued to be funded following the removal of the ring-fenced funding.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the permanent funding of the schemes that were previously part of the Discharge Grant commitments for 2026/27 and recurrently from 2027/28.
2. Note the cost of extending the schemes will be £838k in 2026/27, reducing to £624k on a recurrent basis from 2027/28. Funding has been made available as part of the Council budget and provision has been made in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

116. ROTHERHAM BABY PACKS: OUTCOMES AND FUTURE COMMISSIONING

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the progress of the Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme pilot and sought approval to recommission the scheme for a further period of up to 4 years. On 28th February 2024, the Council approved the Budget for 2024/25, including provision to undertake an open procurement to identify a supplier to provide baby packs to ensure every family had access to essential items from the beginning of a child's life. Following a competitive tender process, Field Management Ireland (FMI) was awarded the Single Provider Framework Agreement in November 2024. The initial contract covered the supply and delivery of up to 5,600 baby packs, with a maximum annual value of £720,000 over 2 years, ending on 14th November 2026.

In September 2025, Rotherham Council undertook its first survey of recipients of the Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme to obtain feedback on user experience and impact. The survey indicated that the baby packs were highly valued by expectant parents with 99% of respondents indicating that they would recommend it to others. Satisfaction levels were exceptionally high with an average rating of 4.82 out of 5 for pack quality and 4.87 for the registration process. Respondents consistently highlighted the financial relief provided by the pack, with 78% agreeing it helped save money, and 80% noted its role in raising awareness of Family Hubs and local support services. Paragraphs 2.4 to 2.8 of the report provided further detail on the consultation with Appendix 1 including the full survey report.

While feedback was overwhelmingly positive, several areas for improvement were identified. The most common suggestions related to earlier delivery of the pack, clearer communication about its contents, and increased promotion of the scheme to ensure wider awareness. Paragraph 2.10 set out the ways in which these issues were being addressed. The proposed actions aimed to enhance the scheme's impact further, reduce duplication of purchases for parents, and strengthen engagement with local support services. This baseline survey provided a strong foundation for measuring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of any changes in the next survey, which was planned for September 2026.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board who advised that the recommendations be supported. Discussions had focused on the cost of the scheme, the impact of multiple births and the reach of the scheme. OSMB had also requested a breakdown of the figures be provided on a Ward basis.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the high level of satisfaction with the baby packs, particularly in relation to the quality and usefulness of the items provided.
2. Approve an open procurement exercise to ensure continuity of registering and delivery of baby packs to Rotherham families.

117. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED AND DISABILITY (SEND) SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2026-2029

Consideration was given to the report which provided a review of performance against the current Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) Sufficiency Strategy as set out in the Local Authority's Safety Valve Agreement (2021-2026). It established that the actions set out within the Safety Valve Agreement had been achieved, contributing to the Council's wider ambition that children and young people achieve their potential. The report also outlined the key activity undertaken in developing the new Strategy, including a comprehensive needs analysis, engagement and consultation. Approval was sought for the new SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2026-2029. A timeline for implementation of the associated delivery plan was also outlined in the report.

In Rotherham 17.1% of pupils are receiving SEND support with 6.2% of pupils having a statutory plan for SEND known as an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Nationally 14.2% of young people were receiving SEND support with 5.3% having an EHCP. In order that the educational needs of children and young people in the Borough with SEND continued to be met, the Council had a responsibility to create a sufficiency of education provision to meet the needs of all pupils.

The current SEND Sufficiency Strategy was set out in the Rotherham Safety Valve Agreement (2022 – 2026). The key strategic aim of the Safety Valve Agreement was to enhance mainstream and specialist SEND capacity within the Borough to meet a wider level of need across all schools, promote inclusive practice and mitigate the need for children, young people, and young adults to be educated in settings outside the Borough. To achieve the aim of enhanced SEND capacity within the Borough the current strategy included implementation of the Schools' Accessibility Funding Framework across mainstream and special schools.

Reports to Cabinet in July 2024 and December 2024 had given approval for additional increases in places as part of the continued development of Elements Academy (SEMH Special School) since its opening in September 2023. Approval was also granted for capital investment to address sufficiency challenges at Newman School and Aspire Pupil Referral Unit. The Capital Programme to create sufficiency of provision locally across the Safety Valve period had resulted in an increase of 336

special school places and 144 resource provision places from 2021/22 to November 2025. A resource provision was attached to a mainstream school providing specialist therapeutic input and support for pupils with a specific SEND need type. Pupils accessed support from the resource provision based on their individual need whilst also accessing mainstream classes and curriculum.

The report demonstrated that the actions set out within the 2022-2026 Safety Valve Agreement, and the associated phases of SEND Sufficiency delivery, had been achieved, contributing to the Council's wider ambition that children and young people achieved their potential.

The Safety Valve Agreement provided a clear and ambitious framework for developing enhanced inclusive provision to meet children's SEND across the Borough with progress against the 9 conditions detailed in section 2.1 of the report. The current SEND Sufficiency Strategy aligned to the Safety Valve Agreement ran until the end of 2025/2026. A new SEND Sufficiency Strategy was required so the Council could fulfil its statutory sufficiency duty and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Planning for the new SEND Sufficiency Strategy had included key activities over the past 12 months, including stakeholder consultation and engagement, needs analysis, comparison to national datasets and policy and a review of the resources available locally. The Strategy had been developed alongside the Rotherham SEND Strategy (My Life, My Rights 2024-2028). The Plan aligned to the increased focus on inclusion in mainstream schools as outlined in the refreshed Ofsted Inspection Framework (November 2025). The Sufficiency Strategy had been developed in line with the principles of the Rotherham Charter (Four Cornerstones): 1. Welcome and care 2. Value and include 3. Communicate 4. Work in partnership. The ambitions of the Strategy, based on the analysis of local need, were detailed in paragraph 2.2.6 of the report.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the performance and progress to date on SEND Sufficiency in line with the commitments within the Safety Valve Agreement.
2. Approve the SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2026-2029 (Appendix 1) for implementation from April 2026.

118. ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report for 2024/25. Each Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SCP) was required to produce and publish an annual assurance report. The annual assurance report, dated September 2025 and covering the period April 2024 to March 2025, was considered and approved by the Lead Safeguarding Partners ahead of its submission to the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the Department for Education. The report was considered at Improving Lives Select Commission in December 2025.

Section 2.1 of the report detailed the matters which had to be addressed as specified by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 was statutory guidance which governs how agencies work to help and protect children. The Independent Scrutineer had determined that the Annual Assurance Report 2024/25 met these criteria.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People stated that strong multi-agency arrangements were in place and she wished to record her thanks to the Rotherham SCP for their hard work. The Executive Director of Children and Young People's services stated that it had been a very positive year.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet note the contents of the Rotherham SCP Annual Assurance Report 2024/25.

119. INCLUSION STRATEGY AND ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which summarised the Council's new Inclusion Strategy which updated the previous Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. Building on the vision of the Council Plan of creating inclusive growth, the new Strategy set out the Council's approach to addressing inclusion-related issues, ensuring services were accessible and the voices of all communities were heard. In addition, the annual report for 2024-25 included key achievements and case studies that demonstrated progress in addressing EDI issues.

The Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030 reflected the ambition set out in the Council Plan 2025-2030: to create an inclusive Borough where no-one was left behind and everyone could achieve their potential. It reinforced the inclusive growth focus of the Council Plan's vision of building a Borough where opportunity was extended to everyone, where people could grow, flourish and prosper, and where no-one was left behind. It described how the Council would focus on listening to residents, engaging

with them meaningfully – particularly those whose voices were not always heard - to address their concerns and ensure services were accessible.

Several significant recent achievements were highlighted in the Strategy. This included receiving an outstanding Ofsted rating for Children and Young People's Services, establishing the RASCAL (Rotherham Adult Social Care Always Listening) group to enable individuals with lived experience to shape future Adult Care Services, and working with local organisations to deliver a community cohesion programme after securing £600,000 from the Government's Community Recovery Fund. At the same time, it recognised that more could be done to ensure that people did not feel excluded, disadvantaged or held back due to their race, gender, disability, or any other characteristic.

The Strategy was informed by a series of focus groups held between August and November 2025, as well as an online survey. Participants in the focus groups reflected the range of protected characteristics. Further details could be found in the consultation report at Appendix 4. The findings had directly informed the Strategy's themes and areas of focus. The agreed themes were:

- **Working together** – demonstrating how the Council would continue to engage with residents and, where possible, design and produce services and plans with them, acknowledging the need to proactively reach out to those who found it more difficult to engage.
- **Responsive services** – focused on the importance of listening to residents, consistently providing feedback, and showing how services were being reshaped (where appropriate) in response.
- **Welcoming places** – reflecting concerns about feeling safe, which was a significant issue for some groups.
- **Employer of choice** – outlining ongoing efforts to ensure that the Council's workforce reflected its diverse communities, with an inclusive approach to recruitment and staff engagement.

A series of actions were included for each theme, providing a focus for activity over the lifetime of the Strategy. A more detailed action plan for 2026-27 was attached at Appendix 2. The Annual Report for 2024-25 provided a summary of recent achievements within the framework of the 2022-25 EDI Strategy and was attached at Appendix 3. The Annual Report also included several case studies that illustrated how positive equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes had been achieved as part of the delivery of services and initiatives. Cabinet Members stated that inclusion of case studies was a good addition to the report.

The report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board who advised that the recommendations be supported. Discussions had focused on consultation, Key Performance Indicators and reliance on the Voluntary and Community sector.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Inclusion Strategy 2026-30.
2. Approve the action plan for February 2026 to March 2027.
3. Note the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2024-2025.

120. BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RELIEF RENEWALS IN 2026/27

Consideration was given to the report which asked Cabinet to consider the renewal applications for the awards of Discretionary Business Rate Relief for the organisations and premises listed in Appendix 1 of the report. This was in accordance with the Council's Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy, approved by Officer Delegated Decision on 1st July 2025.

Central Government and councils shared every £1 of rates due as follows: Central Government (50%); South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority (1%); and Rotherham MBC (49%).

The estimated total cost of granting the relief for the financial year 2026/27 was set out in paragraph 6.5 alongside the specific cost to the Council. The figures were based on the business rates multipliers for 2026/27 announced by the Government at the Autumn budget and on the 2026 Draft Rating List published by the Valuation Office Agency at the same time as the Autumn budget.

As the business rates multipliers were changing from 1st April 2026, assumptions had been made as to the appropriate multiplier to apply when calculating the level of relief and had taken no account of any transitional relief a ratepayer may be entitled to. The Transitional Relief Scheme for 2026/27 had not yet been finalised and was awaiting Regulations being laid in Parliament. Should any ratepayer be entitled to transitional relief, the level of discretionary relief would be reduced to reflect the reduced level of business rates liability.

The Value of Proposed Business Rates Discretionary Relief Renewals was:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Amount of Relief</u>	<u>Cost to RMBC (49%)</u>
2026/27	£853,572.19	£418,250.37

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approve the applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for the organisations listed in Appendix 1 of this report and in accordance with the details set out in Section 6 to this report, for the 2026/27 financial year.

121. DECEMBER 2025/26 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which set out the financial position as at the end of December 2025 and forecast for the remainder of the financial year, based on actual costs and income for the first 9 months of 2025/26. Financial performance was a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance framework and was essential to achievement of the objectives within the Council's policy agenda. To that end, this was the fifth financial monitoring report of a series of reports for the current financial year which would continue to be brought forward to Cabinet on a regular basis.

As of December 2025, the Council's forecast outturn for 2025/26 was an overspend of £3.4m, and whilst there had been movements within Services, this was consistent with the position reported in November financial monitoring. The forecast position was made up of a Directorate overspend of £9.2m, offset by a projected Central Service underspend of £5.8m.

The Directorate overspend of £9.2m was largely due to demand and market pressures in relation to Children's residential placements and placement types, and the cost and complexity of care packages in Adult Social Care. Market prices were increasing at above inflation levels, placing further pressures on the Council's Budget. These pressures were anticipated and a corporate provision of £5.4m was maintained within Central Services as part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2025/26.

Central Services was forecasting an underspend of £5.8m, reflecting use of the £5.4m Social Care Contingency approved within the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2025/26, the impact of the Local Government Pay Award and savings generated within the Council's Treasury Management Strategy. The Local Government Pay Award was agreed at 3.2% at all pay bands up to senior officer. The impact of this was a cost of £2.3m above the budget allocated when setting the Council's Budget. The Council had no control over the level of pay award agreed.

The report also provided details regarding the Department for Education's (DfE) request for the Council to become the grant recipient for the Strategic School Improvement Capital Budget funding for Newman School. This was following the decision of the DfE to re-broker the existing Multi Academy Trust arrangements and bring in another Trust to run the School. In order to ensure that the Newman School project continued to

be delivered and the key outcomes were still achieved, the Council proposed to accept this request. As part of becoming the grant recipient and to take into account the delays experienced through the approval process with the DfE, the Council recognised the increasing probability that costs would increase for the scheme; this included both works on the main site and those required at Dinnington. Therefore, the Council was seeking assurances that the in-principle funding arrangement from DfE remained in place for the main Whiston site with availability of the centrally held DfE contingency should this be required to mitigate against cost increases.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £3.4m.
2. Note the projected overspend and that whilst the Council aims to manage this pressure, should that not be possible use of reserves will be required to balance the 2025/26 financial position.
3. Note the updated position of the Capital Programme.
4. Approve the capital budget variations as detailed in section 2.17 of the report.
5. Delegate authority to the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport in consultation with the Service Director of Financial Services and Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, to approve the specific allocations of the Gainshare Feasibility Grant and any variations required through its delivery, as detailed in section 2.20.1 of the report.
6. Approve the Council being the recipient of Department for Education grant funding as part of the Strategic School Improvement Capital Budget (SSICB) and the Council take over responsibility for delivery of the Newman School project.

122. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX REPORT 2026-27

Consideration was given to the report which presented the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2026/27, based on the Council's Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27, budget consultation and the consideration of Directorate budget proposals. A review of the financial planning assumptions within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had been undertaken.

The proposed Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy reflected the Council's priorities as set out in the Council Plan 2025-2030 and Year

Ahead Delivery Plan. The development of the Budget proposals for 2026/27 and a further update of the MTFS took into account prevailing economic factors, supplier market factors, demand and complexity of care pressures, and the positive improvement in funding available to the Council following the impact of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 (FFR 2.0). Following the Council's technical MTFS updates, proposed budget decisions within this report, the impact of the FFR 2.0 and Provisional Financial Settlement, the Council had been able to propose a balanced budget for 2026/27 and 2027/28 with a potential £9.3m funding gap in 2028/29.

During 2025, the Government had consulted upon and delivered the Fair Funding Review 2.0. This had seen a significant shift in how Local Government was funded and how the resources for Local Government were distributed. The focus of funding distribution had moved more towards areas of greatest deprivation and need. The impact for RMBC of the Fair Funding Review, as confirmed with the Provisional Financial Settlement, was a positive one, with an additional £21.2m of funding per year provided to the Council by 2028/29 (£9.2m by 2026/27 and £15.1m by 2027/28). although this was a significant shift in direction that the Council welcomed, the funding was necessary to address the demand and market pressures the Council had seen in recent years.

Although the position for Local Authority Funding had shifted positively, the Council remained committed to increasing efficiency and delivering on the priorities of residents. As such, in order to invest in key priorities, the Budget included savings proposals of £3.2m aimed to increase the efficiency of service delivery and reduce or remove spending on services that were no longer required or could be delivered differently, for example, through maximising grant funding opportunities.

In recognition of escalating cost pressures within Adult Social Care, relating to increased complexity of care and rising demand for the service, market inflation and transitions, the Council would provide for approximately £8.6m of additional funding to support the delivery of Adult Social Care services. Following work to assess the impact of market inflation, across recent years, on the cost of Children's Social Care placements, the Council would provide approximately £4.8m of additional funding to support the provision of Children's Social Care.

Further investment of an extra £0.5m per year would be provided to address unavoidable cost pressures in complying with Home to School Transport requirements and £1.7m would be invested into the Council's staffing structure to ensure the Council remained an accredited Real Living Wage employer. In addition, the Budget would provide £2.8m additional investments to support with delivering on the Council's ambitions for the Borough, largely focused on improving the quality of life of residents, with specific regard to the Council Plan core strategic outcomes.

In setting the proposed 2026/27 budget, Cabinet was asked to recommend to Council a 3.95% increase in Council Tax, made up of an increase of 1.95% in the Council's basic Council Tax plus an increase of 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept. The Budget also proposed a further year of a Local Council Tax Support Top-up Scheme to operate across 2026/27 to provide continued additional support to low income working age households in the Borough, to assist them in managing the impacts of the cost of living crisis and support the most financially vulnerable households.

In introducing the report, the Leader stated that the Fair Funding Review, which had now been implemented, was good news for Rotherham, although he would have liked the Government to have done more. He stated that one of the consequences of having less money flowing through communities over the last 15 years had been that public spaces had suffered. The Leader was therefore glad that the Budget included proposals to support the high streets. The Budget also included a reduction in swimming charges for people aged over 65 and support for young people with additional needs.

In reference to Council Tax, the Leader explained that, for the seventh successive year, the increase would be less than the full amount allowed.

He thanked all those involved in preparing the budget, including officers, Cabinet Members, Scrutiny Members and people across the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety stated that the proposed Budget was responsible, prudent and realistic. The revenue budget would spend over £359 million of public money directly on services for residents. Following consultation with residents and partners, the proposed Budget would support the most vulnerable people.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People expressed her support for the Budget, which she stated would support families and children in Rotherham. This support included the expansion of the Healthy Holidays programme, additional funding for school uniform support and additional funding for universal youth work. An additional investment of £453,000 was proposed to ensure the effective delivery of Educational Psychology Services, which played a vital role in improving learning, communication, and emotional wellbeing for children and young people.

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces stated that the tourism industry in Rotherham had been growing and equated to £509 million in economic impact for Rotherham. The Budget therefore included investments in the events team and programme. Investments were also being made in green spaces. Safety and maintenance would be improved at Rother Valley Country Park and investment were being made in the fleet and machinery for the Parks Service. The Cabinet Member also referenced the reduction in costs for over-65 to go swimming, stating that

this would provide long lasting benefits to the NHS and people of Rotherham. The athletics track at Herringthorpe would also be resurfaced.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy focussed on road safety. £80k of funding per year for 2 years was being proposed so that local Councillors could develop road safety plans with the Transportation Service for their Wards. A further £260k would be used to support the Council's pedestrian crossing programme. £81k per year for the next 4 years would be used to continue the Council's Transport Minor Works Programme. The Cabinet Member announced that the design of a scheme for improvements to Treeton Lane crossroads would be funded.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care stated that she welcomed all the initiatives in the proposed Budget and looked forward to the outcomes in the coming years.

The Cabinet Member for Housing explained that investment would be made in the Selective Licensing Scheme. The investment would maximise the impact of enforcement and regulatory activity, provide additional direct support to tenants, as well as provide increased capacity to ensure the stakeholder consultative groups were well run and well supported, overseeing the associated capital bid for physical improvements, and resulting spend. The proposal would also look at providing and enhancing wider service provision, utilising other funding sources, such as homeless prevention by providing increased tenancy advice and support, improving drop-ins and engagement of statutory services and providing a more holistic offer to align with the designations and their intended outcomes.

Reference was also made to the Welfare Rights Service. Macmillan Cancer Support currently funded a small team in the Council to provide specialist welfare benefits advice in Rotherham for people who had received a cancer diagnosis. During 2024/25, the team assisted with £3.7 million in benefit claims and secured one-off payments for back pay of benefit exceeding £342,000. However, due to falling donations since the pandemic, Macmillan was no longer able to fund this support beyond the end of May. Due to the specialist nature of this advice and the ongoing need to support residents experiencing cancer diagnosis, it was proposed to invest £135,000 to continue to provide this service in the Borough.

This report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process and the Board fully supported the recommendations. Councillor Steele thanked all Cabinet Members for attending and presenting the Budget in a positive manner. He also thanked members of OSMB for scrutinising the Budget as a critical friend, and not on party political grounds. An additional recommendation was included relating to making all reports clearer, more concise and easier to read. Cabinet accepted this recommendation.

Full details on the discussion of the budget at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting held on 4th February 2026 can be found in the minutes of that meeting.

Councillor Steele wished to place on record his thanks to the Scrutiny Officers for their help in facilitating the scrutiny on the Budget.

The Budget and Council Tax Report would be presented for approval at the Council meeting on Wednesday 4th March 2026.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommend to Council:

1. Approval of the Budget and Financial Strategy for 2026/27 as set out in the report and appendices, including a basic Council Tax increase of 1.95% and an Adult Social Care precept increase of 2%.
2. Approval of the extension to the Local Council Tax Support Top Up Scheme, that will provide up to £131.44 of additional support to low income households accessing the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme. It will support those most financially vulnerable to rising household costs, through reduced Council Tax bills as described in Section 2.5.15 of the report submitted.
3. Approval of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2028/29, as described within Section 2.6 of the report submitted.
4. Approval of the Reserves Strategy as set out in Section 2.8 noting that the final determination of Reserves will be approved as part of reporting the financial outturn for 2025/26.
5. To delegate authority to the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport in consultation with the Service Director of Financial Services and Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, to approve the specific detailed allocations and use of the Local Plan Reserve.
6. To note and accept the comments and advice of the Executive Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), provided in compliance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as to the robustness of the estimates included in the Budget and the adequacy of Reserves for which the Budget provides as set out in Section 2.14 of the report submitted.
7. To note the feedback from the public and partners following the public consultation on the Council's budget for 2026/27 which took place from 28th November 2025 to 9th January 2026, attached as Appendix 5 to the report submitted.

8. Approval of the proposed increases in Adult Social Care provider contracts and for Direct Payments as set out in Section 2.4 of the report submitted.
9. Approval of the proposed approach and increases in Children's Social Care costs as set out in Section 2.4.23 of the report submitted.
10. Approval of the revenue investment proposals set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 2 of the report submitted.
11. Approval of the proposed revenue savings set out in Section 2.7 and Appendix 4 of the report submitted.
12. Approval of the Council Fees and Charges for 2026/27 attached as Appendix 7 of the report submitted.
13. Application of the Business Rates Reliefs as set out in Section 2.10, in line with Government guidance.
14. Approval of the proposed Capital Strategy and Capital Programme as presented in Section 2.12 and Appendices 3A to 3F of the report submitted.
15. Approval of the Treasury Management matters for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 9 of this report including the Prudential Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Investment Strategy.
16. Approval that any changes resulting from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27 be reflected in the Budget and Council Tax Report to Council on 4th March, 2026.
17. Continuation of the principles and measures adopted since April 2020 to make faster payments to suppliers on receipt of goods, works and services following a fully reconciled invoice as described in Section 2.11. of the report submitted.
18. Approval of the procedure for Budget allocations for the Community Leadership Fund as set out in Section 2.9 of the report submitted.
19. Approval that the Capital Programme Budget continues to be managed in line with the following key principles:
 - (i) Any underspends on the existing approved Capital Programme in respect of 2025/26 be rolled forward into future years, subject to an individual review of each carry forward to be set out within the Financial Outturn 2025/26 report to Cabinet.

- (ii) In line with Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules 7.7 to 7.11 and 8.12, any successful grant applications in respect of capital projects will be added to the Council's approved Capital Programme on an ongoing basis.
- (iii) Capitalisation opportunities and capital receipts flexibilities will be maximised, with capital receipts earmarked to minimise revenue costs.

20. That Cabinet agree that the Council should review and refine its approach to producing reports, ensuring that they are clearer, more concise, and easier to read. Streamlined reporting will also help to reduce printing requirements, contributing to lower costs and supporting the Council's work to improve its carbon footprint.

123. ROTHERHAM GATEWAY PROGRESS TO FULL BUSINESS CASE

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update in relation to the Rotherham Gateway Station proposals. The Council was working with partners to promote the development of Rotherham Gateway Station. This mainline and tram-train station would be a catalyst for growth, improving local, regional, and national rail connectivity for all communities and businesses across the Borough, creating employment, and supporting the development of high-quality new homes.

An Outline Business Case (OBC) had been approved by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), the Department for Transport (DfT) and Ministerial approval was received by the Council on 14th January 2026. This approval released funding of £11.35 million to the Council to develop a Full Business Case (FBC) for the scheme. The report recommended that Cabinet accept this funding to progress to Full Business Case with submission to SYMCA for assurance and approval of the Business Case.

To ensure the FBC could progress at pace, it also requested approval to allocate the funding as required and to undertake any actions as necessary to complete the FBC, such as procurement and contract award, design matters and liaison with partner organisations. Following completion, the report sought to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy, for submission of the Full Business Case to SYMCA to approve funding to deliver the project in full.

The outputs of the Full Business Case would include:

- Detailed design completed for the main line station, tram-train stop and floormat between them (including station building / business centre and provision for user-friendly multi-modal transport interchange).

- Appointment of contractors and agreed delivery programme.
- Timetable and economic benefits modelling updated.
- Securing of train operator and service specifier commitments to stop train services at the new station.
- Integrated Transport Strategy agreed and planned (e.g. integrated bus services to maximise station usage).
- Cost plan interrogated and updated.
- Delivery funding strategy and security of funding source in place.
- Consents in place.
- Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Essential land acquisition complete.

The Full Business Case was a significant commitment for the Council, requiring dedicated project support which would have impacts across several Council services. The requirements for this were being scoped. A governance and management structure was being prepared to ensure appropriate resource was in place which included working with partner organisations including SYMCA. Where necessary the Council would secure appropriate external expertise to support the development of the FBC.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

1. Accepts the £11.35 million CRSTS funding from SYMCA to progress the Full Business Case for Rotherham Gateway Station.
2. Grants approval to consult as necessary on the outputs of the Full Business Case as they are developed with the public and scheme stakeholders.
3. Grants approval to allocate the funding as required within the CRSTS allocation.
4. Delegates authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration and Environment in consultation with S151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy to prepare the Full Business Case, undertake any actions as necessary including procurement, and then submit to SYMCA for assurance and approval.
5. Delegates authority to the Service Director Property & Facilities Services (Property Officer) in consultation with the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport, Service Director, Legal Services, and Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy to make an order (if required) via compulsory purchase (Town and Country Planning Act or the Transport and Works Act) to acquire the necessary property interests for the Station.

6. Delegates authority to the Service Director Property & Facilities Services (Property Officer) in consultation with the Service Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport, Service Director Legal Services and Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy to take all steps, and enter into all documentation on behalf of the Council in connection with the making, confirmation, submission, and implementation of the above order, including in respect of any public inquiry, appeal or legal challenge concerning the same.

124. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

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

125. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

The next meeting of the Cabinet would be held on 16th March 2026, commencing at 10.00 a.m.