

COUNCIL MEETING
14th January, 2026

Present:- The Mayor of Rotherham (Councillor Rukhsana Ismail) (in the Chair); Councillors Rashid, Adair, Ahmed, Alam, Allen, Baggaley, Baker-Rogers, Baum-Dixon, Beck, Bennett-Sylvester, Beresford, Blackham, Bower, Brent, A. Carter, C. Carter, Castledine-Dack, Clarke, T. Collingham, Z. Collingham, Cowen, Currie, Cusworth, Duncan, Elliott, Fisher, Garnett, Hall, Harper, Harrison, Havard, Hughes, Hussain, Jackson, Jones, Keenan, Knight, Lelliott, Marshall, Mault, McKiernan, Monk, Pitchley, Read, Reynolds, Sheppard, Stables, Steele, Tarmey, Taylor, Thorp, Tinsley and Yasseen.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

101. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor invited Members to give a round of applause to the following Rotherham residents who had been honoured in the King's New Years Honours list:

- Paul Elliott (Chuckle Brother) had been awarded the MBE for charitable services as an ambassador for Marie Curie.
- Liz Ballard had been awarded the OBE for services to the environment as former Chief Executive of Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust.
- Councillor Adam Tinsley had been awarded the BEM for services to the community in Maltby.
- Jane Elizabeth Shore had been awarded the BEM for services to the community in Wickersley.
- Dominic Hurley had been awarded the BEM for services to charity.

The Mayor also invited members to congratulate Councillor Williams and his wife Rachel on the birth of their baby girl.

A full list of mayoral engagements was set out in Appendix A to the Mayor's Letter.

102. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bacon, Ball, Ryalls, Sutton and Williams.

103. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 5th November, 2025.

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Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 5th November, 2025, be approved for signature by the Mayor.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

104. PETITIONS

Consideration was given to the report which set out the petition that had been received since the last meeting. The petition asked the Council to install a point of safe crossing, such as a pelican crossing on the A6089 in Brampton Bierlow as a matter of urgency. It had 100 valid signatures. Mr. Hickman, the Lead Petitioner, attended the meeting and spoke to his petition. The petition would be responded to by the Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment within 10 working days of the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the relevant Executive Director be required to respond to the lead petitioners, as set out in the Petition Scheme, by Wednesday, 28th January 2026.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester and Councillor Harper declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 109 (HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27) on the grounds of being a Council tenant and having a partner who was a Council tenant respectively and were granted a dispensation to vote.

Councillor Cusworth declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 109 (HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27) on the grounds that a family member was a Council tenant. She remained in the Chamber and voted on the matter.

106. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There was one question from T:

Do you accept that the one totally consistent aspect of RMBC's culture since 2015 has been extensive efforts to silence victims, survivors and those who stand up for victims and survivors?

As T did not attend the meeting, a written response would be provided.

107. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press and public.

108. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S STATEMENT

The Leader also wished to pass on his congratulations to Councillor Tinsley on receiving the British Empire Medal. He noted how diligent and dedicated he worked across the community. The Leader also offered his congratulation to the other Rotherham people in the honours list.

The Leader acknowledged the incredible hard work and dedication of so many people in achieving the Ofsted Outstanding rating for Rotherham's Children's Services. He stated that it had been a long journey but the hard work and commitment from social workers, practitioners, leaders and partners had been reflected in the Outstanding rating. The Leader particularly thanked Councillor Cusworth and her predecessor former Councillor Gordon Watson, noting that being Cabinet Member for Children's Services was an incredibly difficult job with a special burden. There was always more work to do and the Council would never be complacent.

In the week prior to the meeting, the Department for Transport awarded Rotherham green light status in relation to potholes. This was in part due to the £50million of additional capital investment that had been made by the Council and also due to the progressive approach that Richard Jackson and his team had taken.

Finally, the Leader referenced the announcement by Government which confirmed the release of funding for the development of the Council's Rotherham Gateway Station proposal. The announcement also positioned Rotherham at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse Rail plans. The Leader stressed the importance of having mainline train services back in Rotherham as it brought with it new opportunities. It also meant that as the new business space and investment opportunities along the Don Valley Corridor were developed, it would show that Rotherham was open for inward investment from across the country and beyond.

The Leader of the Majority Opposition Group, Councillor Z. Collingham, was invited to respond. He placed on record his congratulations to all involved in gaining the Outstanding rating for Children's Services in Rotherham. He noted that transformation of the Service had clearly been needed following the intervention by Government Commissioners in 2015. The result of that transformation was excellent news for Rotherham children and families. He paid tribute to partners, officers and leaders who had worked hard to achieve this.

Councillor Collingham asked the Leader about the ever increasing costs of children's residential care and home to school transport. He asked what plans were in place to make sure the financial demands on those services did not impact on the demands of other services. He also sought reassurances that all planned works due to start in 2026 in Maltby, Dinnington and Wath would start this year.

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Councillor Collingham raised concerns regarding how the performance of the Street Safe team would be monitored but was happy for the Leader to respond to the question submitted by Councillor Bower on this subject under Minute No. 121.

Finally, the Leader of the Majority Opposition group referenced the U-turns made by the Labour Government and asked if the Leader was willing to U-turn when things, particularly in relation to investments, went wrong and recognise when the wrong decisions had been made.

The Leader was invited to respond to Councillor Z. Collingham. In relation to children's residential care and home to school transport, he explained that work was already underway to address those pressures. Rotherham had bucked the national trend in reducing the number of children in residential care but the costs continued to rise. The 12 most expensive placements in Rotherham cost £10million. The Council had undertaken a huge programme of work creating in-house residential care and continued to work on the Fostering Service. Work also continued on Early Help and Prevention. In relation to home to school transport, it was confirmed that additional investment meant the shortfall was the smallest it had been for a number of years. The Council would be dependent on what came out of the Government SEND reforms but the priority had to remain on ensuring those children had safe transport.

The Leader was confident that the regeneration schemes would commence in Maltby, Dinnington and Wath within a matter of weeks.

In relation to investments, the Leader stated that he was happy with the work the Street Safe Team had already undertaken, particularly in relation to helping rough sleepers. He also stated that it was right to look at where the evidence led in terms of the performance of investments.

Questions on the Leader's statement were invited from all other Members.

Councillor Sheppard welcome the news regarding the Northern Powerhouse Rail plans. He asked how this could be used to provide new skills opportunities for Rotherham residents, with a particular focus on further education.

The Leader explained that there were 2 aspects to the development that could provide new skills opportunities. The first was the construction of the new station and infrastructure which went with that and the second was the opportunities that would come from the best connectivity to other areas across the north. Through procurement processes, the Council would expect local people to be employed in delivering the site. As the proposals progressed, conversations would take place with Rotherham College on how students could be involved in construction and operational matters. Conversations would also take place with SYMCA regarding career's advice and linking this to the new opportunities that would be accessible further afield.

Councillor Reynolds offered his congratulation on the Ofsted inspection outcome. In relation to children's residential homes, he noted that he had visited an in-house residential home and had been very impressed with the staff and the nature of the home. He asked how the Council was balancing the cost of these homes with the needs of the children. Councillor Reynolds was also pleased with the progress on potholes.

The Leader explained that the first duty the Council had was to make sure the needs of the children were met.

Councillor Currie noted the good leadership and governance of the Council, and highlighted the good practices clearly being shown in the Children and Young People's Service. He asked if best practice was being shared between Directorates and Services across the Council, specifically with the Waste Collection Team as residents were still experiencing many issues with this service.

The Leader agreed that the bin service needed to improve capacity and reliability and the Cabinet Member and Service were working on that as a priority. Work was also ongoing in terms of sharing best practice between services.

Councillor Brent placed on record his thanks to all involved in the improvements to Children's and Young Peoples Services.

The Leader thanked Councillor Brent for his comments. He explained that it was important for politicians to set the right environment in order to allow officers, and therefore Services, to succeed.

109. RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

Further to Minute No. 90 of the meeting of Cabinet held on 15th December 2025, consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2026/27 and proposed increases in housing rents, non-dwelling rents and other service charges. It was proposed that Council dwelling rents be increased by 4.8%.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recorded all expenditure and income relating to the provision of Council housing and related services, and the Council was required to produce an HRA Business Plan setting out its investment priorities over a 30-year period.

From the 1st April 2026, the Government would implement a 10-year Social Rent Settlement. This was the Government's Policy on the annual increase for social housing rents. The 10 year settlement set the maximum rent increase at the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as of September the year prior plus 1%. The 10 year rent settlement had given

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greater certainty on the level of forecast income to fund the HRA Business Plan, going forward. It would enable longer term planning for investment, delivery of services and growth. The rent settlement was part of the Government's plan for the future of social housing which promised to enable local authorities and housing associations to deliver thousands of new affordable homes to meet need and drive up the safety and quality of existing homes.

The proposed 2026/27 HRA Business Plan incorporated the Council's commitments to continue and extend the Council's Housing Delivery Programme, alongside significant additional investment to support decency and thermal efficiency in existing Council homes. The Plan included provision for £1.329bn investment in the housing stock over 30 years, an increase of £350m compared to the 2025/26 plan. This was alongside continuing to fund day-to-day housing management, repairs and maintenance costs. £122.9m would be invested to deliver an estimated 500 further Council homes by 2037/38, in addition to the £90.9m that was earmarked to support the current Housing Delivery Programme which is on track to deliver 1,000 homes by summer 2027.

Alongside providing the draft HRA budget for 2026/27, the report recommended proposed levels for housing rents, non-dwelling rents, District Heating charges and other service charges for 2026/27. It was recommended to Council that dwelling rents be increased by 4.8% and up to £2 per week (equivalent to CPI+1% and up to £2 per week rent convergence). This was dependent upon a Government decision expected in January 2026, which would clarify the approach to social rent convergence.

During the meeting, the Cabinet Member explained that a correction to Appendix 4 was required. It stated that garage rents would be increased from £6.56 per week to £6.76 per week for Council tenants. It should have stated that the rent would increase to £7.21 (10%) as correctly stated in paragraph 2.7.23 of the main report. Similarly, the garage rents for non-Council Tenants line in Appendix 4 should have stated that rents had been increased by 10%, from £7.88 to £8.67, as correctly stated in the report.

Some Members expressed concerns regarding rent convergence. Others supported the ambition in the business plan and were supportive of proposals to build a further 500 homes on top of the 1,000 Council homes already planned. The Cabinet Member agreed to raise the issue of off-road parking for Council homes and the distribution of HRA funds in a meeting with officers. Members on all sides of the Chamber had praised the Cabinet Member for the work she had done since taking over the Housing Portfolio.

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Approve the proposed 2026/27 HRA Business Plan.
2. Note that the Business Plan will be reviewed annually to provide an updated financial position.
3. Agree that Council dwelling rents are increased by 4.8% and, dependent upon the Government announcement in January 2026, implement a policy of rent convergence. Allowing rents for social housing properties that are currently below the Government-calculated formula rent to increase by an additional £2 per week in 2026/27. If convergence is capped below £2 that will be the level applied.
4. Agree that the Council should retain the policy of realigning rents on properties at below formula rent to the formula rent level when the property is re-let to a new tenant.
5. Agree that affordable rents are calculated at relet, based on an individual property valuation.
6. Agree that affordable rents are increased by 4.8% in 2026/27.
7. Agree that shared ownership rents are increased by 5% in 2026/27.
8. Agree that charges for communal facilities, parking spaces, cooking gas and use of laundry facilities are increased by 3% in 2026/27.
9. Agree that charges for garages are increased by 10% in 2026/27.
10. Agree that the District Heating unit charge per kWh remains at 13.09 pence per kWh.
11. Agree that the decision to reduce the price of District Heating Charges during 2026/27 be delegated to the Service Director of Housing in conjunction with the Service Director of Financial Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing. The delegation would only be used to respond to a change in Government policy or a significant change in the Ofgem price cap that has the effect of a lower unit price.
12. Approve the draft Housing Revenue Account budget for 2026/27 as shown in Appendix 8.

Mover: Councillor Beresford

Seconder: Councillor Alam

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester requested that his vote in favour of the resolutions be minuted.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester and Councillor Harper declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 109 (HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27) on the grounds of being a Council tenant and having a partner who was a Council tenant respectively and were granted a dispensation to vote.

Councillor Cusworth declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 109 (HRA Business Plan, Rent Setting and Service Charges 2026-27) on the grounds that a family member was a Council tenant. She remained in the chamber and voted on the matter.

110. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATE

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, this report provided an update to Council on the activities and outcomes of Overview and Scrutiny activity at the Council. It summarised the work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) and the Select Commissions - Health (HSC), Improving Lives (ILSC) and Improving Places (IPSC). The updated work programmes for each were attached as appendices.

Councillor Steele, in moving the report, highlighted that 40 substantive items had been considered across all Commissions since the last update in July 2025. There had been 16 opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny and 3 workshops. One reviewed had been completed in relation to Access to Contraception. Two reviews were ongoing, and Councillor Steele was going to look into the By-Laws review as he was unhappy with the length of time it was taking to conclude. One item had been called-in, and 3 site visits were planned for early 2026. There continued to be strong engagement with partners, officers and the public along with good attendance and engagement from Members. Planning was underway for the Scrutiny Work Programme for the 2026/27 Municipal Year.

Councillor Blackham in seconding the report thanked all Members and officers involved in the scrutiny process. He also thanked Councillor Steele for his leadership.

Resolved:

That Council receive the report and note the updates.

Mover: Councillor Steele

Seconder: Councillor Blackham

111. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR DALTON AND THRYBERGH

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Dalton and Thrybergh as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy. An update report had been provided as part of the agenda and each Ward Member was invited to speak.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester moved the report. He informed Members that Councillor Ryalls was unable to attend the meeting due to a serious family emergency. He placed on record his thanks to Councillor Ryalls who he credited with restoring the trust of residents in reporting issues in the Ward to the Council. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester also wished to record his thanks to the officers who worked in the Dalton and Thrybergh Ward, particularly Jo Talbot and Nicola Hacking and the Area Housing Officers.

Councillor Bennett-Sylvester expressed his support for neighbourhood working and the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy. Councillor Ryalls had planned to speak about Strengths Based Working, but this would instead be distributed by a memo. Members for Dalton and Thrybergh were very excited by the prospect of Strength Based Working and working with residents to achieve more than before. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester referenced the Love Where You Live Scheme and the work done by Wayne Munro-Smith. He applauded the work done in Dalton and Thrybergh on litter picking but for going further and getting more litter bins. There were also more snow wardens now.

Councillor Elliott seconded the report.

In response to a question, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that walkabouts with the Chief Executive had been useful, and he reiterated that the information regarding Strength Based Working, due to be presented by Councillor Ryalls, would be provided in a memo.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

112. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATES FROM WARD COUNCILLORS FOR DINNINGTON

Further to Minute No. 55 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November 2018, consideration was given to the Ward update for Dinnington as part of the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy. An update report had been provided as part of the agenda and each Ward Member was invited to speak. Due to recovering from illness, Councillor Hall declined the invitation and was happy for her Ward colleagues to give the presentation.

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Councillor Castledine-Dack moved the report and stated that regeneration of Dinnington High Street had been the main focus. The project was aimed at making the town centre and markets a more vibrant and attractive place for residents. Construction was set to begin in 2026 with the burned-out building to be demolished in the coming weeks. Work was also underway to support other areas within the Dinnington Ward. Councillor Castledine-Dack stated that Neighbourhood Officers had supported quarterly meetings for local businesses which had improved communication and collaboration to drive economic growth. Social media training sessions for businesses had been funded and delivered. Town Centre Anti-Social Behaviour and Flytipping had been an issue, but Councillors were working with the Police to tackle this. Fixing the roads had been a major priority. A footpath project was underway in Laughton Common.

Councillor Clarke seconded the report and announced the Councillors had been pleased to support Dinnington Rugby Club with new kit and equipment to support young players. Due to concerns raised regarding Nitrous Oxide canisters in the Health Select Commission, this was now an agenda item for the Safer Neighbourhoods Priority Group. Councillors continued to work closely with litter picking groups and the Parish Council. The Citizens Advice Bureau was now running weekly session in Dinnington Library, and this was very welcome. Councillor Clarke reported that young people in Dinnington were very happy and proud of the improvements made to Chestnut Grove Park. Prior to Christmas, 3 separate power outages had been experienced in Dinnington alongside serious criminal activity. This had been extremely challenging for local businesses. Councillor Clarke welcomed the positive impact the Street Safe Team would bring and thanked Ward colleagues, officers and partners for their work on these issues.

The Community Leadership Fund had been used to fund a workshop for traders and business owners in Dinnington. The Air Cadet building had reopened in time for their 40th anniversary. A new Standard and celebration event was supported by CLF funding. The Festival of Remembrance was a particular highlight for Councillor Clarke.

The Ward Members thanked Andrea Peers and Sam Kendal for their hard work in the Dinnington Ward.

In response to a question it was confirmed that the Ward Members worked well with the Parish Council.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

113. **NOTICE OF MOTION - RESTORING RAIL AND TRAM TRAIN SERVICES FOR SWINTON, ROTHERHAM, AND DONCASTER - ENSURING RELIABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR OUR COMMUNITIES**

It was moved by Councillor Cusworth and seconded by Councillor Monk that:

Summary/Background:

This Council notes:

- That train timetables serving Swinton Interchange and Rotherham Central to Doncaster and return were halved during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- That despite the lifting of restrictions, these timetables have not been fully restored, leaving communities with fewer, less reliable services.
- That this reduction disproportionately impacts residents who rely on rail for work, education, and leisure, undermining efforts to promote sustainable travel and economic growth.

Impact on Tram Train Services - Prior to the pandemic, Swinton enjoyed three trains per hour, complemented by 3 tram trains at Rotherham Central, providing a service approximately every 10 minutes into Sheffield. Currently, the timetable has been significantly reduced, with just one train from Leeds, one from Doncaster, and 2 tram trains. This results in a fragmented and inconvenient timetable, making public transport less attractive and reliable for residents.

That this Council believes:

- That Rotherham should not be facing reductions in its public transport provision, and that reliable heavy and light rail services are the minimum that our residents deserve.
- That accessible, dependable public transport is a cornerstone of social and economic inclusion.
- That restoring full services is essential to support local communities, reduce car dependency, and meet climate commitments.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Call on train operating companies and the Department for Transport to urgently reinstate pre-pandemic service levels between Swinton Interchange, Rotherham Central, and Doncaster, including both heavy rail and tram train services.
2. Work with regional partners, including the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, to press for investment in rail and tram train services that meet the needs of residents and reflect the importance of frequent, reliable public transport.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

114. MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING

Consideration was given to the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 15th September 2025 and 20th October 2025.

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 17th November 2025 and 1th5 December 2025, be received.

Mover: Councillor Read

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

115. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee be noted.

Mover: Councillor Baggaley

Seconder: Councillor Allen

116. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board be noted.

Mover: Councillor Baker-Rogers

Seconder: Councillor Cusworth

117. LICENSING BOARD AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Licensing Board and the Licensing Committee be noted.

Mover: Councillor Hughes

Seconder: Councillor Garnett

118. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board be noted.

Mover: Councillor Mault

Seconder: Councillor Jackson

119. STAFFING COMMITTEE

Resolved:

That the reports, recommendations and minutes of the meetings of the Staffing Committee be noted.

Mover: Councillor Alam

Seconder: Councillor Read

120. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were 2 questions:

1. Councillor Yasseen: How SYPA reconciles any claim of “responsible investment” with the absence of publicly available reporting that shows:
 - how stewardship decisions are made,
 - when escalation is used or rejected, and
 - how SYPA holds asset managers to account when they vote against Local Authority Pension Fund Forum (LAPFF) backed resolutions?

Councillor Beresford, one of Rotherham’s representatives on South Yorkshire Pensions Authority, explained that:

- Both SYPA and Border to Coast published Responsible Investment (RI) policies, including corporate governance and voting guidelines, on their websites.
- Quarterly Responsible Investment update reports were presented at full Authority meetings (which were both webcast and published online).
- Voting reports for Border to Coast equity funds and stewardship-related reports were available on Border to Coast’s website.

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- SYPA reported against the 12 Principles of the UK Stewardship Code and became a signatory in 2025. The Code was voluntary and being a signatory to the Code demonstrated an investor's commitment to stewardship and providing transparent reporting on the stewardship they undertook on behalf of their clients and beneficiaries. Border to Coast was also a signatory to the Stewardship Code.

Councillor Beresford understood that Border to Coast's voting records generally aligned with LAPFF recommendations; any deviations were reported with rationale to SYPA and partner funds. If there were specific issues Councillor Yasseen wished to raise, Councillor Beresford was happy to do this on her behalf.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that the documents referenced were very technical and vaguer than presented. She asked if SYPA could commit to publishing, on an annual basis, a summary of its engagement with LAPFF, a breakdown of how SYPA voted on the forum's alerts, and explicit information on whether the pensions fund has diverged its decision making from the forum in terms of escalation of recommendations.

Councillor Beresford confirmed that a written response would be provided.

2. Councillor Yasseen: Following major incidents such as the Kiveton Industrial Estate fire and the Merseyside BESS fire, has South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority been consulted on emergency access, water supply and containment of contaminated run-off for the proposed Rotherham solar farm?

Councillor Taylor, designated spokesperson for Rotherham on South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, explained that the Authority were not consulted on this as they were not a statutory consultee and the developer was under no obligation to seek their views. However, Councillor Taylor confirmed that the Service was aware of the Whitestone proposals and it would remain active in accessing the relevant risks. It would also make any necessary representations.

In her supplementary, Councillor Yasseen stated that she appreciated that it was not a statutory consultee but asked if the Fire Authority could reassure residents that the risks to public health, air quality and local water courses would be monitored.

Councillor Taylor stated that it was common practice for developers to contact the Fire Safety Officers for advice but this advice was not required to be recorded. In light of the number of queries received in relation to solar panels and battery storage systems, the Fire Service were producing a factsheet to aid members of the public.

121. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRPERSONS

There were 21 questions:

1. Councillor C. Carter: From reviewing the letter sent to parents and guardians regarding school admissions it does not make clear the schools which are in catchment and the map on the Council website to find this information is very clunky. Why is this?

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People explained that, while the mapping tool was widely used, recent feedback suggested that it could feel clunky for the end user, and so officers would review the tool and consider how to add clearer guidance to improve the user experience.

In her supplementary, Councillor C. Carter stated that some other local authorities included the catchment schools on the letter sent to parents. She asked if this could be done in Rotherham.

The Cabinet Member agreed to hold a meeting with Councillor C. Carter and officers to look into this proposal. She also encouraged all Members to contact her if they came across any similar issues.

2. Councillor Bower: Which performance indicators will be used to measure the effectiveness of the new Street Safe team?

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Community Safety explained that the team was now deployed across the Town Centre and principal towns and would be operating between 8.00 a.m. and 8.00 p.m. from the beginning of February now that recruitment and onboarding was almost complete, with just one post remaining vacant.

The Team's most valuable work could not be captured by numbers alone: already in the short time they had been deployed, the teams had supported victims of domestic abuse, responded to individuals in mental health crisis, and provided early intervention and signposting for many, to prevent harm. These actions build trust, improved wellbeing, and strengthened community resilience. The Council would capture these impacts through case studies and feedback from residents and partners, ensuring the full picture of the Team's contribution was understood.

The effectiveness of the new Street Safe team would be measured through a mix of related performance indicators and wider impacts. Specific indicators of relevance were the levels of:

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- anti-social behaviour
- enforcement outcomes such as fixed penalties, legal notices and legal action,
- footfall, and levels of community engagement.

The Council would continue to monitor public confidence through surveys and feedback, and review partnership outcomes with agencies like the police and housing services.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bower stated that some of the impacts referenced could not be related directly back to the Street Safe Team. He was concerned that scrutiny was being conducted on a “vibes” basis and not on hard data. He asked what hard data could be used.

The Cabinet Member explained that feedback from residents, local business and the service was vital to assessing the impact of the team. A range of data would be used to do that.

3. Councillor Reynolds: How many brownfield sites were actually considered by the Whitestone solar project?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

4. Councillor Reynolds: When did the Council become involved, informed that consultation on this project would be happening?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

5. Councillor Reynolds: Before the current site [Whitestone] was identified what involvement had RMBC had in arriving that this was the best possible solution and the only option worthy of progress?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

6. Councillor Reynolds: I have not found anyone who supports this plan anywhere in Rotherham. So if the electorate is totally against it will the Labour majority in RMBC please come back with proposals to resolve this matter and stop the democratic process becoming compromised to a point where people feel completely overlooked and never listened to?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

7. Councillor Thorp: Under Towns and Villages funding the Stag area got £150,000 but as the project started there was a problem, as the department running this TV funding found out there were plans to build another much needed cycle lane, so part of the work planned never happened, so where did this Fund go to 18 months on still no answers.

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

8. Councillor Thorp: On Thursday January the 8th another apology for missed bin collections was sent out sighting vehicle breakdowns, well if you don't run a waste collection along good business practice like Biffa or any other waste company dose what do you expect and also excessive tonnage of waste due to the festive period, was this an early April Fool's joke.

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces explained that this period had been challenging, with cold-weather breakdowns and more trips to the tip needed than usual due to Christmas waste, and that was a problem that had been faced by other councils too. The Council had, rightly, diverted some of their drivers onto gritting during the particularly cold spell since Christmas. There is only so much capacity. The Cabinet Member appreciated the frustration this caused residents and stated that was being taken seriously. The Council had active recruitment campaigns and were bringing in additional staff, which was helping to restore capacity, and it would continue to do so.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp asked to be provided with the data on how many times bins had not been collected due to excessive waste over the Christmas period for the last 10 years.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that a written response would be provided.

9. Councillor Thorp: Why are we considering moving changing the Easter school term break to be a fixed date instead of when the Easter Christian festival is, determined from the first full moon after the spring equinox so, the first full moon after the 21st of March. This has been like this for decades why change. We are a Christian country act like one.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People explained that Rotherham had moved to a fixed Easter holiday calendar in 2022, in line with Sheffield and Doncaster Councils. This change was introduced to provide greater consistency and certainty

for families, schools, and employers when planning term dates. Under the traditional system, Easter could fall anytime between late March and late April, which often caused significant variation in school holiday patterns year to year. It was known that uneven term lengths caused disruption to children's educational progress.

A fixed-date approach helped reduce disruption, while still allowing schools and communities to celebrate Easter as a religious festival. For children and young people, this provided a more predictable school year, supporting continuity in learning. It also helped families plan activities and childcare well in advance, which could contribute to a more positive holiday experience, and on some occasions could help Rotherham families to get cheaper holidays.

Bank Holidays, including Good Friday and Easter Monday, continued to be observed within the fixed holiday period, ensuring that families could still enjoy traditional celebrations without impacting the stability of the school calendar.

The Cabinet Member did state that the consultation remained open and Members had been feeding in their views.

10. Councillor Thorp: Yorkshire Water had another water main burst at Worrygoose Island over Christmas. The grass and plantings that cost in excess of £20,000 according to RMBC have been destroyed; the grass is compressed sand and tyre tracks all-over the Island and across the planting. How is RMBC going to replace the destruction to the Island at no cost to the tax-payer.

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces explained that Yorkshire Water had recently carried out repair works on a burst main on Worrygoose Island and caused consequential damage to the surface planting. Yorkshire Water would be required to return to complete the reinstatement of the damaged landscaping at their cost when weather conditions allowed.

In his supplementary, Councillor Thorp asked if any of the damage caused by vehicles was the fault of RMBC.

The Cabinet Member explained that some minor damage had been caused to the grassed areas by Council vehicles when installing and removing the Christmas tree. This had already been scheduled for repair in early spring.

11. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: The Rothbiz article "Transport funding diverted to Rotherham Gateway Station project" inferred funding was set to be diverted from areas such as the Mushroom Roundabout. Is the station being built at the expense of continued congestion on the A630 in Dalton?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

12. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What has been the cost of deploying parking enforcement officers at Forge Island since October and what is the estimated loss of revenue from parking charges since the Arc cinema opened?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

13. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: It is welcome that the siting of temporary accommodation units or crash pads is more evenly distributed across the Borough than in 2023. What has changed in the way properties are allocated in the past 3 years to create a more even spread?

The Cabinet Member for Housing explained that a new Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy was introduced in 2023 to better manage our increasing portfolio of temporary accommodation, strengthening the framework for placement decisions and alignment to household needs.

In 2024, the Council further increased the provision of temporary accommodation to 173 to provide more appropriate, sustainable, and cost-effective options for households (including families) where temporary accommodation was unavoidable. In making these changes, the Council had enabled a wider geographic distribution of placements and reduced reliance on unsuitable or costly provision.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester stated that he had been critical of the numbers in the past as the most deprived areas had a disproportionately high number of crash pads compared to other Wards. However, they were now more evenly spread across the Borough. A concern that Councillor Bennett-Sylvester had was that it was difficult to contact officers if there were any issues with crash pads. He asked if a 7 minute briefing could be arranged for Members to set out how referrals could be made and who could be contacted at the Council if there were issues relating to the crash pads.

The Cabinet Member explained that use of the crash pads usually involved multiple agencies, so she understood the difficulties in working out who to contact. She agreed to arrange a 7 minute briefing.

14. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: We are seeing several businesses in the Howard Street using the public highway to display goods in a variety of forms and cooking food. Is this allowed?

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The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

15. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester: What are the requirements for community groups and leaders to participate in decision making for Pride in Place funding?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

16. Councillor Yasseen: Why did Council not require/guide the solar farm developers to hold consultation events within the directly affected villages (Brampton-en-le-Morthen, Harthill, and Todwick) rather than primarily outside these communities, ensuring local residents most impacted had accessible opportunities to engage and provide feedback on the solar farm proposals?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

17. Councillor Yasseen: Will the Council explicitly record in its report that the solar farm proposal would take Best and Most Versatile (BMV) productive arable farmland, conflicting with:

- Government's planning policy & ministerial guidance to avoid BMV land & prioritise brownfield/lower-grade land,
- Government's Land Use Framework
- Local food security aims,

Therefore urge the Labour Government to better protect the Borough's best farmland?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

18. Councillor Yasseen: Has the Council commissioned or reviewed an independent assessment of the environmental and agricultural impacts of losing approximately 4,700 acres of productive Rotherham farmland to the proposed solar farm development, including effects on soil quality, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and local food production?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

19. Councillor Yasseen: What consideration has been given to the loss of local heritage and landscape character, particularly where parts of the proposed solar farm site are recorded in the Domesday Book and include listed buildings and public rights of way?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

20. Councillor Yasseen: Given Whitestone's electricity will be sold at gas linked market rates, offering no reduction to residents in household bills while profits flow to overseas investors, what concrete local benefits such as guaranteed jobs, business rates retention, or ring-fenced community funding will the council demand for residents to justify supporting the scheme in any form?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

21. Councillor Currie: With the recent Government statement on pavement parking ,what will the Council be doing to ensure that the secondary legislation is introduced in 2026?

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Jobs and the Local Economy was not present at the meeting to answer and as such, a written response would be provided.

122. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items to consider.