

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 10 March 2026**

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jackson, Mault, Stables, Taylor and Thorp and co-optees Mrs K. Bacon and Mrs M. Jacques.

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

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2026

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th January 2026 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 53 (Events Review 2025-26) on the grounds that they were the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.

Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 54 (Draft Playing Pitch Strategy) on the grounds that they were the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.

In relation to Minute No. 54 (Draft Playing Pitch Strategy), the Chair asked Members to declare any interests they had in community centres, schools and parish councils and the following interests were declared:-

Councillor Lelliott – Brampton Youth Club

Councillor Adair – Treeton Community Centre

Councillor Ahmed – Governor at Coleridge Road School and Chair of Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance

Councillor Beck – Governor at Wales High School

Councillor Sheppard – Governor at Rawmarsh & Arnold Children's Centres

Councillor Tinsley BEM – Governor at Maltby Academy and Town Councillor at Maltby Town Council.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

The Chair advised that there were no members of the public or representatives of media organisations present at the meeting and there were no questions in respect of matters on the agenda.

52. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that there were no items of business on the agenda that would require the exclusion of the press or public from the meeting.

53. EVENTS REVIEW 2025-26

At the Chair's invitation, Councillor Marshall, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Green Spaces (Cabinet Member), introduced the item and expressed pride in the wide range of events and festivals which were delivered by the Events team in 2025. The Events team also supported delivery of the Children's Capital of Culture (CCoC) programme over the festival year, enabling over 500,000 people to participate in CCoC events across the borough.

The Cabinet Member stressed that events were vital in bringing communities together and building cohesion. The events programme over the past year had garnered positive media attention and increased civic pride in Rotherham. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that not every year could be a busy festival year and that the events team would look to build on progress made over the coming year.

Leanne Buchan, Head of Creative Programming & Engagement, took Members through the presentation, highlighting that whilst it provided an overview of the work of both the Events team and the CCoC team, they were separate teams.

The Rotherham Culture Strategy was adopted in 2019 and would come to an end in 2026. At the time the strategy was developed, Rotherham's participation figures were 10% below the national average so one of the key drivers under that strategy had been to host "*Amazing Events*". Consultation with Members had taken place in 2019 on the key objectives of the Strategy which were - promoting community cohesion, increasing civic pride and improving the profile and reputation of the town. Over the last five years of the Strategy, the events programme had grown and had provided opportunities to engage with communities and audiences from both within Rotherham and outside.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement stressed that whilst the events themselves represented the visible output, the input and significant work of teams behind the scenes to deliver events also deserved recognition. The Events team provided community event support via the Rotherham Event Safety Advisory Group (RESAG) – e.g event applications processed, advice on fundraising, risk management and insurances provided. Codes of practice around sustainability and accessibility were also being developed. It was reported that the Events team also regularly worked with a range of other partners in delivering events, such as Flux Rotherham (Flux), who was represented at the meeting by Helen Jones (Director, Creative People & Places Programme).

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The types of events delivered over 2025-26 were broken down as follows:-

- 1) **Borough events** - large-scale mass audience events which could attract audiences in excess of 10,000, such as the Rotherham Show, Bonfire Night and the Christmas Lights switch on;
- 2) **Town centre events** – aimed to specifically drive footfall into the town centre, such as the Roots Rotherham Street Carnival and the WoW festival;
- 3) **Civic events** - aligned to national commemoration, such as Remembrance Day and Holocaust Memorial Day; and
- 4) **Major one-off events** - such as the CCoC programme.

For the borough events, the combined attendance throughout 2025 ranged from 63,000 to 117,000. The economic impact varied but the Rotherham Show was particularly successful in 2025, as for every £1 that the council spent, it saw between £13 - £14 return to the local economy. This was higher than the average national return for events, which was between £7 - £8 return for every £1 spent.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement talked Members through the attendance figures within the presentation. These had been calculated by taking the overall amalgamated figure for visitors and participation across Culture, Sport and Tourism and applying that proportionally to the events. Both the Rotherham Show and Bonfire Night event had exceeded their targets but the Christmas Lights switch on had been below target, largely due to poor weather on the night. Estimated participation had increased at the Christmas Lights switch on, in spite of lower attendance figures, and participation had increased significantly at the Rotherham Show.

The focus of the larger scale town centre events was to increase footfall, to reconnect communities and to improve perceptions of safety amongst particular target groups, such as young people, women and girls. Combined attendance at town centre events was around 30,000, which marked significant growth on figures of around 10,000 three to four years ago. The town centre events tended to generate a lower economic impact but still represented around £3.64 for every £1 spent by the council spends, with a large proportion of that going back to support local businesses.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement explained that community events were not organised by the council but were supported through the event applications programme. 62 applications for events taking place on council land were processed across 19 wards in 2025. It had been identified that in 2025, no events on council land had taken place across the following wards:- Aughton & Swallownest; Dalton and

Thrybergh; Rawmarsh East, Thurcroft & Wickersley and Kilnhurst and Swinton East. As part of targeted engagement activities, the Events team would look to prioritise engagement in those areas to encourage increased participation. Boston Castle ward had the highest number of events, as it includes the town centre. Flux had been involvement in engagement work in a number of wards which had led to more communities coming forward to the council with proposals for their own events.

It was explained that attendance and participation numbers for the key civic events tended to remain steady as there was a loyal audience base that returned each year.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement shared positive social media comments and commented that the reputation of Rotherham in delivering high quality cultural events was gaining publicity from media outlets wider than the local press, including the BBC and ITV. This was significant for pride and cohesion in the borough.

It was explained that a significant amount of funding from outside sources had been secured to assist in delivery of the events programme. For example, almost half of the budget for the Rotherham Show had come from Arts Council England. There was also an element of commercial funding via trade stalls. With regard to town centre events, funding had come from a range of sources, with a large proportion from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The major, one-off events had a significant impact in terms of the visitor economy and provided opportunities for all residents of the borough to experience things that they might not otherwise have been able to access.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement took Members through the programme of special events to mark the CCoC year, picking out the following highlights:

- 1) **Otherham** - which took place in the first month of the programme over five sites across the town centre, with five large scale projections that had been written and created with young people.
- 2) **Roots Street Carnival and parade** - saw attendance grow from 6,000 to 11,000 in the CCoC festival year.
- 3) **One Voice** - the annual music singing festival saw a big uplift in participation in 2025, from around 750 participants to 1,500 children and young people who took part in the event via their schools.
- 4) **School Baton Relay and Festival of Sport** - was an inspiring event where 84 schools participated in a 10-day baton relay across the borough, culminating in the Festival of Sport at Herringthorpe Stadium.

- 5) **RHS Flower Show at Wentworth Woodhouse** – some of the gardens on display at the Flower Show had been designed by children and young people and after the event, the designs were given back to local schools.
- 6) **Uplift Urban Sports Festival** - had a much larger presence in 2025 and expanded to take in parkour, dance and DJ performances.
- 7) **Rotherham Opera** - was a high-profile event where 2,000 children and young people were able to work with the Royal Ballet and Opera to performing stories they had designed and created over two days.

The CCoC programme of events resulted in 513,709 participations from children and young people across the borough, with 83,743 active participations. This represented an engaged audience who had experienced an event and would hopefully go on to engage and participate in something else. The council also provided crucial signposting to 75 other events and activities that took place across the borough. This increase in active participation helped to develop and build volunteering opportunities, with 651 volunteering opportunities provided throughout the festival year, resulting in the council now having access to 86 registered volunteers across Culture, Sport and Tourism.

The Events team had taken some time to assess which events had worked well during the CCoC festival year and should be taken forward in future years. As a result, the projected programme for 2026-27, which was due to commence on 1st April 2026, showed the inclusion of some of the more successful events, such as Otherham and the recent projection-led Rotherham Loves Music, which would become an annual Winter Lights Festival. A new annual St. George's Day celebration was also planned for April.

Some events which had not achieved the hoped for footfall and participation and therefore could not justify the cost of the logistics involved would continue, but outside of the town centre and would be more community-based, such as the Signals Music Festival and WoW Rotherham.

With regard to KPIs for measuring success going forwards, the Events team would look to start tracking the contribution of events to the visitor economy - Rotherham's event audiences were roughly made up of 70% residents to 30% visitors. Contributions to health and wellbeing in supporting volunteering and participation opportunities could also be measured as a way of reducing isolation and loneliness Press coverage had been tracked throughout the CCoC year and this could be continued. The Events team would also look at how they could more accurately track the impact of events on community cohesion. Performance targets for

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2026-27 Events under the Council Plan were to increase visitor numbers to 140,284 visitors and increase participation in cultural activities to 26,350.

As a closing comment, Helen Jones from Flux commented that Flux received an incredible amount of support from the council's Events team and wider Culture, Sport & Tourism team, and would not be able to deliver such ambitious, high-quality work without them.

The Chair invited Members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the Events Review 2025-26 and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:-

Councillor Lelliott asked for confirmation as to what level participation figures were now at, compared to the national average. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement confirmed that participation figures were now at 4% below the national average, so were moving in the right direction but that it was taking some time to get up to that level.

In a supplemental question, Councillor Lelliott asked what the Events team intended to do to further embed community engagement with smaller community-run groups. Whilst it had been encouraging to see the partnerships with well-known local organisations such as Wentworth Woodhouse and Grimm & Co, Councillor Lelliott felt that opportunities had been missed to engage with local, grass-roots community groups.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement commented that links had been made with local community groups but acknowledged that more work could be done to broaden engagement. The engagement work was relatively new to the Events team as they had previously commissioned events. The Roots Festival was the first time where the event had been organised in collaboration with local groups and this did have a positive impact on engagement and attendance figures.

The Chair asked if there was a specific plan to target community groups. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement responded that there was a plan to specifically target those wards and areas where no event applications had been submitted, in order to try and understand the possible barriers to engagement. With regard to the Rotherham Show, postcode data had been collected so that would enable the team to look at which postcode areas and wards were less well represented at events.

In a further question, Councillor Lelliott asked for confirmation as to how attendance data was captured per event, to ensure that there was no double counting. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement explained that it was difficult to accurately capture visitor numbers but that engagement and participation data could be captured more accurately as a clicker was used to count at the point at which visitors engage or participate, for example in a workshop. There may be some visitors who had attended multiple events but this was a good reflection on

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engagement if people were returning.

Councillor Lelliott also asked whether there was any data on the impact of events on town centre businesses. Anecdotally, Councillor Lelliott had received reports that some town centre businesses took the decision to close on event days as they felt that they did not benefit them.

Helen Jones from Flux commented that whilst many town centre businesses had decided to close, one business that had stayed open for the recent events had reported their best takings. Flux was currently looking at the responses to surveys sent out after events, where many who attended had commented that it would have been good to have coffee vans available in the town centre for events because many businesses were closed. It was acknowledged that work would be done to better communicate with local businesses the possible benefits of staying open for events. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement further commented that it remained challenging for town centre businesses as the hours of evening events did not always align with their regular opening hours, leading to additional staffing costs. The Town Centre Manager had carried out a lot of work engaging with town centre businesses prior to event days.

In a final question on CCoC, Councillor Lelliott felt that engagement with communities and groups in more deprived areas could have been better as more affluent families were more likely to proactively attend cultural events. What would be done in the future to ensure that children from more deprived backgrounds had the access and means to attend events?

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement confirmed that once the CCoC festival year closed at the end of March, the Events team would work on embedding the connections made with community groups in order to try and engage them at an earlier stage when developing future events. It was hoped that increased engagement would also assist in overcoming some of the barriers which prevent people from attending events. Whilst the majority of council-run events were free to attend, there would always be add-on costs such as transport and food etc.

Councillor Yasseen echoed the comments of Councillor Lelliott regarding improved engagement and commented that the Events team could do more to identify the gaps where greater outreach work could be carried out with underrepresented groups. Councillor Yasseen was also aware of groups who had wanted to run events but had found the “red tape” involved in setting them up too restrictive and mentioned the Rotary Club as an example. Councillor Yasseen felt that more work could be done in capacity building with smaller organisations to support them to deliver events to the residents they represent.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement confirmed that the Events team were very keen to support local groups to be able to deliver local events and there were plans to review the event application process

to consider how it could be more accessible to local providers.

The Chair asked whether, in the spirit of “one council”, the Events team received good support from other council departments in their work in delivering events. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement acknowledged that there was often “red tape” encountered but that this was usually due to strict safety regulations and was not obstructive but necessary. RESAG included representatives from the emergency services and there were strict regulations around the amount of first aid available at an event. The Events team worked closely with the litter picking and street cleansing teams around events and the Communications team provided support, but with limited capacity. As a result, external providers were often commissioned using the marketing budget for each event.

The Chair asked what Members could do to support with event delivery? Helen Jones from Flux commented that a lot of help and support was available in the town centre but that the same level of support was not always visible in specific wards and neighbourhoods, which often depended on the capacity of the Neighbourhood Officers. Where support and collaboration were forthcoming in local neighbourhoods, the outcomes were impressive, such as the Maltby High Wire Festival in 2025.

Councillor Ahmed complimented the Events team on the success Rotherham Show in 2025, which had grown bigger and better in recent years on less budget. As a representative of the BAME community, Councillor Ahmed commented on the improvement in community engagement at the Rotherham Show, stating that there had been a marked increase in requests for stalls in the Equality & Diversity gazebo. Councillor Ahmed also highlighted the addition of the sensory room at Clifton Park Museum as a hugely positive development.

Councillor Ahmed asked whether service felt it was beneficial to commission groups to lead on activities or whether it was better to keep it in house? The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement responded that it would depend on the activity and the capacity and capability of the relevant group but highlighted the recent development in the capacity of BAME groups as an example where good commissioning relationships were now in place.

Councillor Allen mentioned the gaps in delivery of events across the new annual events calendar (at page 46 of the Agenda Pack) and commented that it would be a shame if there were no summer activities such as “Summer of Play” planned for families during the summer holidays, where attendance and engagement rates could be high. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement confirmed that events were planned for the 2026 summer holidays but would not be in the town centre, as footfall for these events had previously not been strong enough. As the footfall was generally better when events were taken out into the community, delivery across the borough would be the focus for this summer holidays’ events.

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Councillor Sheppard thanked officers for the incredible work and progress that had been done in Rotherham with regard to events and commented that other towns and cities would be envious of the output. Councillor Sheppard commented that the suggested KPIs going forward looked strong and made particular reference to the KPI regarding health and wellbeing and the link to the important work that volunteers do to support the delivery of events.

Councillor Sheppard asked if it was possible to track the path of those who had engaged in cultural events or volunteered and whether they had gone on to a career or further participation in the culture sector? Councillor Sheppard commented that it was important to celebrate local success in these pathways.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement responded that it was not possible to track individuals who had attended an event or participated in a workshop as the council did not hold that level of personal data. However, it would be possible to track the journey of young artists who had received mentoring and support, and also trainees and volunteers who had helped to deliver events. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement confirmed that data around the onward career path of these groups could be provided to Councillor Sheppard.

Chris Siddall, Head of Sport, Leisure and Strategic Partnerships (Head of Sport), provided some more information on the additional support provided for community events via RESAG, which meets every month. Around 40 different events went through the process in 2025, whereby organisations approached RESAG to ask for support from the emergency services, Licensing, the Culture & Tourism team and Public Health to confidently manage and deliver events safely. It had been noted that the number of applications had increased recently, with meetings sometimes taking place twice a month. One recent success story was highlighted, the Wickersley 10k race, which had just taken place the previous weekend. The event had only run for the first time last year but had doubled in size and RESAG had assisted the community organiser to further build and develop it to become a major event for the borough.

The Chair asked whether any apprenticeships had been created to support the Events team. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement confirmed that 160 paid traineeships had been created to support CCoC. There was not sufficient funding to continue with this number of traineeships after the CCoC year, but some alumni roles had been created with the Events team and other partners involved in the delivery of CCoC events, so opportunities had been created within the culture sector in Rotherham.

Councillor Jones asked how many external event providers had made applications to host events within the borough? In order to create an “experience led” town centre, Councillor Jones commented that

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Rotherham would need to attract bigger, wider public events to increase footfall and would need help from external providers to deliver this. Councillor Jones reported that some viewed events in Rotherham as a “closed shop” and asked how the Events team planned to attract external providers rather than the “usual suspects” of Rotherham-based partners.

The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement explained that it would be difficult to answer that question in numbers. There had been 62 event application packs issued but these could range from small-scale community events to large events such as the Rotherham Show. The events which had gone through RESAG tended to involve audiences of 3,000 or more and could be subject to higher safety criteria. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement was not aware of anyone who had struggled to deliver an event in Rotherham but would be happy to talk to them if Councillor Jones could provide any information.

Councillor Jones questioned the accuracy of the footfall figures. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement explained that there were different methods depending on where the event was located. In the town centre, there were footfall cameras which would monitor footfall in the three weeks prior to an event and then use a formula to calculate any increase in footfall over the period of the event. These figures were not wholly accurate as the same person could walk past a camera six times, but the data was helpful in ascertaining whether footfall was increasing or declining and in assessing safety requirements. No footfall count was taken for the Rotherham Show or Bonfire Night, but these events were split into zones and each member of staff in charge of a zone would carry out an hourly head count.

Councillor Jones further commented that in the bar chart of events for Rotherham West ward, it stated there had been 5 events but, as Ward Councillor, they had only been aware of 4 which had taken place. Service confirmed that they would provide Councillor Jones with further information on the events which had taken place in this ward outside of the meeting.

In an additional question, Councillor Jones queried why less events were planned to take place in 2026-27 when additional budget had just been approved to support the delivery of events. The Head of Creative Programming & Engagement explained that the overall number of events planned had not decreased but that some would be re-worked to take place outside of the town centre and into communities. With the additional approved budget, the Events team would be able to enhance the outreach offer to enable them to carry out more work within communities. There had previously not been the capacity to do this.

In a final question regarding communications, Councillor Jones commented that communications around the recent Rotherham Loves Music Festival had been poor and that there needed to be a more joined up approach to marketing and communications for events to ensure that

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local businesses felt that they were being included in partnership rather than excluded.

The Cabinet Member commented that part of the reason why additional budget had been approved for the Events team, was to increase resource and enable them to improve on making connections and communicating more effectively.

The Chair thanked officers for their input and Members for the questions asked.

Resolved:-

1. That the contents of the presentation providing an Events Review 2025-26 be noted.

(Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 53 (Events Review 2025-26) on the grounds that they were the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.)

54. DRAFT PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY

At the Chair's invitation, the Cabinet Member introduced the item and explained that the Playing Pitch Strategy (Strategy) was fundamental to the council's plans to protect and invest in outdoor sports pitch provision across the borough. Access to good quality playing pitches did not just benefit sport but was important to health, wellbeing, community cohesion and long-term strategic planning.

Over the last year, the council had commissioned Knight, Kavanagh and Page consultants (KKP) to draft the strategy and had worked alongside Sports England, relevant sports national governing bodies, local clubs, schools and community organisations to develop the robust assessment of Rotherham's current and future pitch needs. The Strategy provided the council with a clear evidence base and highlighted where provision was strong, where pitches were under pressure, and where investment or protection was urgently needed. The Strategy was also aligned with key borough priorities contained within the Cultural Strategy and the Health & Wellbeing Strategy. It was essential to ensure that the right conditions were created for people of all ages and backgrounds to be more active more often. The Cabinet Member drew particular attention to the significant work underway with the Football Foundation on the development of a portfolio approach to 3G artificial pitches, which represented a significant opportunity for Rotherham.

The Head of Sport explained that the formulation of this Strategy had been long overdue. The last time any formal assessment of sports pitches in the borough had taken place was in 2005. At one point, Rotherham was

the only borough in Yorkshire that did not have an up-to-date assessment of its playing pitch stock.

The funding of around £24,000 for the Strategy had come via a section 106 developer contribution from a housing development in Dinnington. The developer needed to know how they could supply sports, pitches and facilities in relation to their obligations within that area. However, it was difficult to carry out an accurate analysis just within that locality without considering the wider area and border issues with Sheffield and North Nottinghamshire. The whole borough was now set to benefit from the work done by KKP, alongside the council, in developing the Strategy.

It was explained that the draft Strategy was due to go to Cabinet for approval in April and that once formally adopted, it would be used as an evidence base for shaping future action plans for the development of playing pitch facilities. The Strategy underpinned a number of the council's key priorities, namely:-

- To enable as many people as possible within the borough to be active, to get creative and to get outdoors more often.
- To create better conditions for residents to be active every day. Levels of inactivity in the borough had improved but there was still more work to be done.
- To promote better physical and health and wellbeing. Whilst the better sports provision would cater for those that physically play the games, there would also be other roles and opportunities associated with the pitches, such as volunteering, working groundsmen, club secretaries. These roles would also contribute positively to people's mental health and wellbeing.
- To ensure that the borough had the right facilities in the right places and at the right level. The quality of pitch provision had dropped over the years, and the Strategy provided an opportunity to address these quality issues.

The Strategy had been produced to be compliant with Sports England's methodology. The sports covered by the Strategy were football, cricket, Rugby Union, Rugby League, hockey and tennis. It was reported that there was also significant demand for the new sport of padel, for which there was currently no provision within Rotherham. Service was aware of a number of planning applications that had been made by external, private providers who were seeking to improve the padel offer across the borough.

The Strategy provided an evaluation of the quality and the quantity of existing pitches, along with how accessible they were. The use of pitches for both winter and summer sports, which had taken some time. The Strategy also considered population growth, and current participation

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trends, which would enable the council to forecast future need. This in turn, would support the work of colleagues in Planning in gauging what additional facilities might be needed if the population of a particular community increased.

It was reported that the turf quality of many of the borough's playing pitches had declined and had not kept up with developments in turf technology. The examination of usage rates and usage patterns would enable the council to make sure that the needs of communities and residents in relation to current day standards were being met.

The Head of Sport commented that pitches were not used solely for sports of a competitive nature but were also used for a variety of other activities, both organised and ad hoc. Whilst the council owned pitches and sites across the borough, there were many pitches also within the ownership or control of sporting clubs, governing bodies, schools, the voluntary sector and community organisations. The Strategy offered an opportunity to coordinate these different stakeholders associated with playing pitches across the borough.

A steering group had been established, which was made up of different partners and sporting bodies, including the council and sport governing bodies. The scope of the geographical area to be considered with the Strategy had also been defined. As Rotherham bordered a number of other local authority areas, clubs were likely to draw in players from Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster etc. Players who lived in those neighbouring areas may also come into Rotherham to play. It was reported that there were around 550 football teams across 116 clubs within the borough. An audit had been carried out on the quality of existing pitches using Football Association methodologies and the level of demand for pitches and what sizes were required had also been considered.

The Head of Sport commented that following the wealth of information gathered in developing the strategy, Members would have the opportunity to support delivery by developing the action plan. Service was keen to work together with Members and local communities to improve the borough's playing pitch stock.

Rachel Stothard, Sport & Physical Activity Manager, continued to provide more detail on the consultation that had taken place with Sport England, sporting governing bodies, local clubs, schools and education providers. These partners were asked about their aspirations for the future, with increased participation for women and girls' football being a key message. Since the Women's Euros in 2022, the growth in women and girls' football in Rotherham had been around about 30-35%. However, it was important to ensure that the right facilities were available to enable women and girls to participate, such as appropriate changing rooms, toilets, showers etc.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager confirmed that in pitch assessments, the council's stock had not scored well, and that work and

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investment would be required to improve these pitches and to provide more training for grounds maintenance.

The headline findings were highlighted as follows:-

- Shortfalls were identified across football, particularly for 11 v 11 matches. Future demand was projected to worsen and a clear need for more grass pitches by 2040 had been identified.
- There were currently 7 3G (artificial) pitches in the borough with a shortfall identified of between 9 possibly rising to 13 pitches.
- There was also an identified shortfall in cricket pitches, with an overplay on squares. A couple of cricket sites within the borough had been shut due to “ball strike” assessments noting the distance between the wicket and housing was too short.
- There were enough hockey pitches to cover demand in Rotherham.
- There were 56 tennis courts across the borough with some recent investment from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) at Rosehill Park and Herringthorpe Valley Park.
- The previously referred to shortfall of courts for the popular new sport of padel was estimated to be around 21 courts. However, there were planning applications in place for some new courts.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager explained that the 3G Pitch Portfolio Project was an outcome from both the development of the Strategy and the Local Football Facility Plan, which was created and overseen by the Football Foundation and Sheffield and Hallamshire County Football Association. The council would be working with these bodies with the aim to deliver the identified 9-13 3G pitches that were lacking, as part of a portfolio approach. This approach had been taken due to an acknowledgement from The Football Foundation that there had been a significant historic lack of investment in Rotherham. The council Planning department had also suggested to The Football Foundation that an application for Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies could provide a way of match funding the required 3G pitches. This type of portfolio approach had never been done by the Football Foundation and represented a groundbreaking opportunity for Rotherham. There would be significant economies of scale in taking this approach.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager took Members through the list of possible locations for 3G pitches across the borough, and explained that the following sites had since been taken out of the portfolio due to alternative plans:-

- Brampton Ellis playing fields.
- Parkgate FC;
- Thrybergh Academy;

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- Herringthorpe playing fields; and
- Swallownest Miners' Welfare.

There was current uncertainty over whether the preferred site in Dinnington (the area which had originally attracted the section 106 monies that had funded the Strategy) would be Dinnington High School or Dinnington Rugby Club.

It was explained the funding for the 3G pitches would come from a combination of sources. The Football Foundation had indicated that they would fund between 60%-65% of a 3G pitch. The council would be asking partners, schools and organisations to fund the remainder, whilst also submitting applications for Strategic CIL monies for further support. The cost of a 3G pitch could range from between £800,000 to £1.2 million per pitch. Although the Dinnington School 3G pitch would be likely to be cheaper due to it being a re-surface not a new build. The investment in so many at once represented very positive news for Rotherham.

With regard to the next steps, the Sport & Physical Activity Manager explained that the Football Foundation was currently undertaking a desktop survey of sites and further intrusive studies to check that no sites had been affected by historic mining. A separate application to the Football Foundation would have to be made for each pitch and each application would require evidence of community engagement. As a result, there was a lot of community engagement currently going on where Neighbourhood teams and ward Members could help and support. It was hoped that pre-applications to Planning for pitches would be submitted around April/May 2026, with applications for Strategic CIL monies later in 2026.

The Chair invited Members of IPSC to raise questions and queries on the Draft Playing Pitch Strategy and in the ensuing question and answer session the following points were raised:-

Councillor Lelliott asked whether an inclusion strategy would sit alongside the Strategy to ensure that the pitches and clubs were open and accessible to all, even when there was a cost associated with use. A lot of families in the borough would struggle to pay the subs for a football team and some facilities were gated, with access limited without payment. Councillor Lelliott commented that there were difficulties in identifying sports coaches who were able to get out into the community to deliver sessions to groups.

The Head of Sport explained that for all pitches, community use agreements would be put in place that would set out pricing structures, opening times and sessions etc. The funders would not want to see pitches shut off and access limited to large proportions of the community. The aim would be to increase usage for all, not to have them empty. It could increase vandalism if sites were closed off and inaccessible, The Head of Sport provided the example of pitches at Kiveton which were left open to all and had been very well used. For the 3G pitches, each site

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would be required to maintain a sinking fund of around £25,000 to cover maintenance costs as these would be higher, the more the sites were used.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager further emphasised that community use was at the heart of these plans. For example, the idea of keeping pitches available for general use once the football season was over (e.g. keeping goal posts up in parks) was being explored to ensure that community use was available all year round. Workforce was reported to be a challenge in the sports industry generally, hence the shortage of sports coaches.

Councillor Jones commented that a number of the identified 3G sites were within the grounds of PFI schools and that it could be difficult to negotiate with PFI contractors with regard to community use. There was often significant cost involved in any variation of the PFI contracts and provision of caretakers etc.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager responded that the Football Foundation had experience of working with PFI schools and were aware of the potential issues. As a result, the Football Foundation had created a dedicated post for dealing with PFI contracts and this person would work to ensure that where it had been agreed that a percentage of use would be for the community, this was adhered to by the PFI contractor.

Councillor Beck congratulated the Sports team for taking the lead on the project and the innovative work with the Football Foundation. Councillor Beck commented that whilst they appreciated the inclusion of Killamarsh Juniors on the list of potential locations for 3G pitches (at page 64 of the Agenda Pack), as it was out of borough, they were of the opinion that Rotherham Strategic CIL monies should not be spent on this site. Councillor Beck queried whether Strategic CIL monies could be spent on those sites which had been marked "Protect" in the report – for example, where replacement surfaces were required. It was clear that keeping up with the ongoing maintenance and operation costs of the sites would be key to the success of this project, which highlighted the importance of the sinking funds.

The Head of Sport explained that a number of schools and clubs had approached the council for a 3G pitch but then realised the high cost and ongoing maintenance commitment involved in running them. The funders were very clear when 3G pitches were placed in school environments that their primary use was to be community access and not to enhance the school curriculum.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager explained that Killamarsh Juniors was not part of the 3G portfolio project but had been included on the list to demonstrate that there were 3G facilities in the south of the borough, as a number of Rotherham children played for that team. It was confirmed that as a condition of funding, the sinking funds referred to for ongoing

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maintenance of the 3G pitches would have to be held in an external account to protect those funds. With regard to protecting current pitch stock, the Strategy would provide an evidence base to enable the council to approach developers to highlight the sites where section 106 funding could be applied.

Councillor Yasseen queried why a full-scale consultation had not been carried out with wider groups such as “Friends of” groups, Members, local residents and informal users. The Head of Sport responded that KKP, who had undertaken the work to formulate the Strategy, were very experienced in conducting surveys of the pitch facilities and their main focus had been to understand the current pitches in the borough and their quality and use. To complete this, KKP needed to consult with parties who would know the most about current pitch use and liaise with experts on pitch quality. Wider consultation to consider community participation would be carried out as part of future work in preparing the new Moving Rotherham Strategy, in conjunction with colleagues in Public Health and Sport England.

Councillor Tinsley BEM asked whether all pitches across the borough had been identified as they were aware of some tennis courts and a football pitch in Maltby that had not been mentioned in the report. Councillor Tinsley BEM also asked whether the Strategic CIL monies would be applied to sites other than 3G football pitches.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager acknowledged that there probably were some sites that had not been picked up in the report but commented that the Strategy would be a living document and could be updated if further sites were revealed. It was confirmed that the Strategic CIL monies would be used solely for the 3G pitches as to broaden its use to wider sports would make the project unmanageable.

The Head of Sport further commented that following recent 100% funding of tennis courts in Rosehill Park and Herringthorpe Valley Park, the LTA had approached the council with another tranche of available funding for tennis sites. It was confirmed that a number of sites within Maltby were in consideration for further support and it was hoped that this could be progressed.

Councillor Sheppard commended the work on the Strategy as an excellent model for providing improved sporting facilities and bringing external investment into the borough. Councillor Sheppard asked how the Strategy could support existing clubs to access sources of funding that the council would not be able to access.

The Sport & Physical Activity Manager responded that part of their specific role was to build on sports development and a number of networks had recently been established (e.g tennis network, cricket network) which met regularly to develop plans for that sport in the borough. The Strategy would open doors for clubs and work on it had

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pulled together a number of different stakeholders. The Head of Sport further commented that sports were multi-funded and maximising collaboration opportunities would be key in the delivery of the Strategy going forward.

Councillor Carter commented that the report had revealed that some council-owned pitches were of poor quality, which was a reflection of historic underinvestment in facilities. What assessment had been carried out on these pitches and was long-term underinvestment considered as a factor that had potentially reduced usage?

The Head of Sport explained that the Institute of Groundsmanship had a defined technical assessment that considered the quality of turf by putting a grid down and looking at the percentage of weed, root, germination etc. Officers carried out inspections and would consider visual and anecdotal evidence. Underinvestment would have had some impact on pitches, but it was noted that turf science had also developed hugely within the last 20 years. Local authorities did not have the funds to maintain pitches at a very high standard whilst balancing the demands of community and public use. Investment in further 3G pitches would solve some of the problems with regard to maintenance and longevity.

Councillor Allen, on behalf of Councillor Lelliott who had had to leave the meeting early, put forward a suggested additional recommendation requesting further information on inclusion work once delivery of the Strategy was underway.

The Head of Sport confirmed that updates on this work could be provided to Members but pointed out that work would be done in stages, with different sites working to different timescales. Service would consider when would be best to provide a further update to Members.

The Chair thanked officers for their input and members for the questions asked.

Resolved:-

1. That the contents of the Draft Playing Pitch Strategy and presentation be noted;
2. That the proposed Draft Playing Pitch Strategy be endorsed to go forward for Cabinet approval in April 2026; and
3. That it is requested that once the Draft Playing Pitch Strategy has been approved by Cabinet and work is underway on delivery, Service reports back to IPSC on the work done with sporting governing bodies, partners and organisations to ensure that access to pitches is inclusive across the borough and that appropriate community use agreements are in place.

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(Councillor Sheppard declared a personal interest in Minute No. 54 (Draft Playing Pitch Strategy) on the grounds that they were the former Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for this Service within the last 12 months.)

(In relation to the Draft Playing Pitch Strategy, the Chair asked Members to declare any interests they may have in community centres, schools and parish councils and the following interests were declared:-

Councillor Lelliott – Brampton Youth Club

Councillor Adair – Treeton Community Centre

Councillor Ahmed – Governor at Coleridge Road School and Chair of Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance

Councillor Beck – Governor at Wales High School

Councillor Sheppard – Governor at Rawmarsh & Arnold Children's Centres

Councillor Tinsley BEM – Governor at Maltby Academy and Town Councillor at Maltby Town Council.)

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

The Chair asked if any Members had any questions or comments on the work programme update set out within the agenda pack.

Councillor Allen queried why a number of items on the work programme were indicated to be delivered as "Off Agenda Briefings" as in their view, if an item was appropriate for IPSC to consider, it should be presented in a formal public meeting.

The Governance Manager commented that discussions were underway within the Governance Team regarding the wording of this kind of update and how best to bring those items forward to enhance transparency and openness. It was confirmed that Councillor Allen's comments would be taken into consideration as part of this process.

Resolved:-

1. That the current work programme be noted; and
2. That that the Governance Advisor be authorised to make any required changes to the work programme in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair and would report any such changes back at the next meeting for endorsement.

56. URGENT BUSINESS

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

