

**CABINET/COMMISSIONERS'  
DECISION MAKING MEETING  
Monday, 6th June, 2016**

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Beck, Hoddinott, Lelliott, Roche, Watson and Yasseen.

Also in attendance:- Commissioners Bradwell, Kenny and Myers.

Apologies for absence were received from Commissioner Ney.

**21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.**

Commissioner Myers indicated that, whilst he was not a decision-maker in respect of Item 8 on the agenda (Reductions to the Public Health Grant and initial proposals for the Council achieving the savings), it should be noted that he was an Advisory Board Member of Public Health England.

**22. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

A member of the public attended the meeting to put a question to Commissioner Myers, which followed up on his question which was put at the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting held on 26 May 2016, regarding his compliance with the council's Constitution and whether advice had been obtained from the Council's Chief Legal Officer in this regard.

In response, Commissioner Myers highlighted that alternative legislation governed the powers and remit of government appointed commissioners at local authorities. The protocols which had been prepared following the appointment of Commissioners at Rotherham MBC set out how decisions would be taken in accordance with that legislation and not the Council's constitution. Commissioner Myers added that these protocols were agreed by the Council's Chief Legal Officer.

The member of the public asked a further question regarding "emergency" decisions taken by Commissioners in private following the establishment of open and transparent decision making meetings for both Cabinet and Commissioners and queried why this had happened and whether the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board or, in his absence, the Chairman of the Council (the Mayor) had been consulted on the reason for the emergency.

Commissioner Myers indicated that there was provision for urgent decision making, rather than emergency decision making. He further added that he could not recall making any decisions, but had been consulted on two urgent decisions in respect of maintenance work at schools which would be better undertaken during school holidays rather

than during term time to avoid disruption to pupils, which he had supported.

The Leader of the Council indicated that a written response would be sent to the member of the public clarifying when the last private Commissioner decision making meetings were held and reiterated the Council's commitment for formal decision making to take place in public meetings, such as this meeting, where possible.

**23. ROTHERHAM: A CHILD-CENTRED BOROUGH**

Consideration was given to a report which set out the aspirations for Rotherham to become a borough which was recognisably child centred in the development of its policies, its community developments, its sports and leisure facilities and its service delivery.

It was reported that the aspiration was for Rotherham to become a place where it was clear that children and young people represented the most important investment that could be made to secure a vibrant, healthy and productive future for its people and for generations to come. The declared ambition for Rotherham sought for every child to have a positive start in life and a good childhood in order that they could grow into well adjusted, emotionally resilient individuals who would enjoy healthy and mutually respectful relationships in adulthood, become responsible citizens and be able to be good parents to their own children in time. It was noted that the first group of children who would need to benefit from the proposal were the children in the care of the Council and for whom the Council was the 'Corporate Parent'.

It was noted that the Lifestyle Survey could provide insights into the experiences of children and young people and measure the success of plans to become a Child-Centred Borough. The paper set an aspiration for a Child-Centred Borough around six principles:

- A focus on the rights and voice of the child;
- Keeping children safe and healthy;
- Ensuring children reach their potential;
- An inclusive Borough;
- Harnessing the resources of communities; and
- A sense of place

Cabinet Members broadly supported the recommendations within the report and the six principles on which the Child-Centred Borough would be based. It was noted that the reduction in funding from central government for Public Health would impact on the support that could be provided to address such issues. Following a query, it was explained that three schools had not responded to the Lifestyle Survey due to workload issues and that those responses would be followed up.

Commissioner Bradwell indicated that there were excellent ideas within

the report, but it would be imperative to avoid complacency for the vision to be achieved. It was considered essential to involve vulnerable young people in progressing the ideas within the report and the Member Working Group would need to seek to involve vulnerable young people who were not in formal education.

**Commissioner Bradwell agreed:**

- (1) The ambition for Rotherham to become a Child-Centred Borough.
- (2) The six priority principles of a Child-Centred Borough.
- (3) The establishment of a member-led working group to develop the actions to achieve the priorities for a Child-Centred Borough, including how impact would be measured.
- (4) The publication of the Voice of the Child Lifestyle Survey report, as a benchmark for future years' monitoring of the success of the Child-Centred Borough ambitions in changing the experiences of children and young people in Rotherham.
- (5) A report on progress at regular intervals, commencing with a follow up report in October 2016.

(As this is a Commissioner decision, it is not subject to 'call in'.)

**24. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A PLANNED CLOSURE OF SILVERWOOD AND CHERRY TREE HOUSE CHILDREN'S HOMES AND THE AGREEMENT TO THE RELOCATION OF NELSON STREET LEAVING CARE SERVICE TO HOLLOWGATE.**

Consideration was given to a report which sought agreement to commence consultation on the proposal for a planned closure of Silverwood and Cherry Tree House children's homes and to relocate Nelson Street Leaving Care Service to Hollowgate.

It was reported that the 'Looked After Children and Care Leavers Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2015 – 2018' had identified that too many looked after children in Rotherham lived in residential care and that more children needed to be placed in a family based setting. A comprehensive review had been undertaken and completed in February 2016, which incorporated the views of children and young people, including young inspectors and the Looked After Children Council, parents and carers, feedback from councillors and a range of professionals who have worked with children who have complex needs.

It was noted that the Council had three children homes with Silverwood being the one remaining home that provided long-term care for male and female young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Cherry

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Tree House and Liberty House provided long-term care and short breaks, respectively, for children with disabilities and their families. It was further noted that the Council had three leaving care accommodation and support services in a property adjacent to Silverwood (formerly known as the Annexe); Hollowgate and Nelson Street, which provided care to young people transitioning from residential care to semi-independent living.

Cabinet Members recognised that there had been issues with the Council's children homes and that a significant amount of work had gone into improving them. However, it was not possible to make the two homes outstanding and with unit costs being very high and social workers indicating that they had little confidence in place children in the homes, it was necessary to consult on the proposal to close the home. The Council's ambition was for children to be looked after in family settings and reference was made to the current campaign to recruit more foster carers to secure more local placement options.

Commissioner Bradwell indicated that she concurred with the comments of Cabinet Members and added that she had visited the two homes and found that the physical environments were not acceptable for modern use. Consequently, the ambition had moved towards providing care within a home environment, not a council residential home environment. The Commissioner indicated that she would like a fully costed plan which detailed the proposed timescales for the recruitment of foster carers, which is fully costed.

### **Commissioner Bradwell agreed:**

- (1) That the consultation on the proposed closure of Silverwood Children's Home and Cherry Tree House be commenced.
- (2) That a further report on the outcome of the consultation in relation to Silverwood Children's Home and Cherry Tree House be submitted to the first Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting following the conclusion of the consultation.
- (3) That the Hollowgate Leaving Care Accommodation be retained.
- (4) That the Nelson Street Leaving Care Service be relocated to Hollowgate, and the building be decommissioned, remain closed and be returned to the Corporate Property Unit.
- (5) That the short breaks provision at Liberty House be continued.
- (6) That the property adjacent to Silverwood Children's Home be retained whilst the current residents' care needs are reviewed.

(As this is a Commissioner decision, it is not subject to 'call in'.)

**25. UPDATE OF THE TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT: LEARNERS AGED 16-19 MARCH 2016 AND HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY - APRIL 2016**

Consideration was given to a report which sought to update the Transport Policy Statement for Learners aged 16 – 19 years and the Home to School Transport Policy to include detailed covered within the statutory guidance documents issued by the Department of Education.

It was reported that the Department of Education had introduced a more prescriptive appeals procedure to ensure that parental appeals for free transport assistance would be administered more equitably across all local authority regions. The statutory guidance had required minor procedural and administrative amendments to Rotherham's appeals procedure, which had been updated and prompted the submission of the report for Cabinet's approval.

Cabinet Members were supportive of the proposed changes and recognised that the report effectively recommended bringing the council's policies in line with statutory guidance.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) That the updated Transport Policy Statement for Learners aged 16 – 19 (March 2016) be published.
- (2) That the updated Home to School Transport Policy (April 2016) be published.

**26. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved:-**

That under Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of such Act indicated, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order.

**27. REDUCTIONS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT AND INITIAL PROPOSALS FOR THE COUNCIL ACHIEVING THE SAVINGS**

Consideration was given to a report which recommended a series of measures and proposals as to how the Council could address the further recurrent reductions in funding of the Public Health Grant for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

It was reported that a number of measures had already been introduced and further proposals had been identified to generate savings, each with varying levels of financial, reputational and health impact risk. Proposals to meet the required savings in 2017/18 had been explored with some of the savings to be achieved via service tenders for contracts expiring towards the end of the current financial year. It was noted that final decisions for saving proposals would be taken in October 2016 following stakeholder and public consultation on the future direction of Public Health services in Rotherham.

It was further noted that additional recurrent savings would need to be identified to address the grant reduction, which meant that the in-year reductions would lead to some reductions in Public Health services. Further savings would be explored through the transformation of behaviour change services and consolidating all behaviour change services in a single wellness service, which would be incorporated within the Public Health Services Consultation Exercise.

It was recognised that the reductions to the Public Health Grant from central government would result in service reductions in public health and necessitated the establishment of a public health reserve, within corporate reserves, to deal with any major epidemics.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the initial measures introduced and the further proposals for identifying the additional £1.3million budget savings required for 2016/17 be noted and endorsed, along with the current ideas for potentially identifying a further £423,000 for 2017/18 against the Public Health Grant reductions.
- (2) That the intention and timeline for stakeholder and public consultation on the future direction of Public Health Services in Rotherham be noted and endorsed.
- (3) That, following the consultation exercise, the final recommendations for meeting the required grant savings for 2017/18 be submitted as part of a paper outlining a five-year vision for Public Health in Rotherham to the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting in October 2016

**28. STRATEGIC ACQUISITION OF 15 AFFORDABLE HOMES ON PHASE 1D AND 1E, WAVERLEY AND AT LINDUM DRIVE/ HALL CROFT, WICKERSLEY**

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval to purchase 15 affordable housing units, 12 of which were at the Waverley development and the remaining three units were at Lindum Drive/ Hall Croft, Wickersley.

It was reported that the strategic acquisitions of new properties supported the aims of the Housing Strategy and increasing the council's housing stock would ensure that high quality social housing was available to those who needed it and would avoid the polarisation of communities, as the properties in question were located on private housing estates.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the purchase of twelve homes from Barratt/ DWH for a total consideration of not more than £1,227,000 be approved.
- (2) That the purchase of three homes from Redrow Homes for total consideration of not more than £293,000 be approved.
- (3) That the cost of purchasing the properties be met from the Housing Revenue Account Strategic Acquisitions Budget.
- (4) That the homes be added to the Council House stock and let via Keychoices.