

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
6th June, 2018

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Brookes, Cowles, Cusworth, Evans, Keenan, Mallinder, Napper, Sansome, Short and Walsh.

Apologies for absence:- Councillor Wyatt.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

3. TO CONSIDER WHETHER THE PRESS AND PUBLIC SHOULD BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING DURING CONSIDERATION OF ANY PART OF THE AGENDA.

The Chair reported that there were exempt appendices included with the report at item 8 on the agenda (Forge Island Development) and that the meeting would go into closed session if there was a need to refer to those appendices.

4. THE HOUSE PROJECT

Consideration was given to a report which recommended participation in a project with funding from the Department for Education (DfE) which would aim to co-produce with care leavers an approach to finding alternative housing solutions for securing a permanent home for young people leaving care.

The proposed project was a DfE Innovation Funded project which sought to further test the idea of the House Project and to explore the possibilities of its application in other local authority areas. It was noted that a number of elements would need to be tested as part of the project. This would include:

- Bringing young people together to develop and manage the project. More specifically RMBC will need to consider how young people become part of the management board and how they make an application to gain accommodation via the House Project as part of the first phase of the feasibility study.

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- Working with housing colleagues to determine the most appropriate accommodation strategy for the project. This will explore the feasibility of utilising council homes in the project, whilst recognising it must not disadvantage those already on the housing register or be detrimental to the Housing Revenue Account in terms of maintaining income collection rates and asset values.
- Developing a personalised housing plan for each young person as soon as practicable to enable the property allocation process to work effectively and ensuring waiting times for properties to become available are not too long.
- Working with young people to identify the right accommodation that meets their needs and be responsible for the accommodation.
- Exploring what will be the best temporary tenancy/licensing arrangements and how the young people can transfer into a permanent home.
- Working together to consider the scope of decision making for young people and what elements of housing management can be handed over to young people in a way that supports RMBC to manage the expectations of young people while at the same time shows commitment to the principles and values of the project.

The report recommended that the Cabinet progress the offer so that the Council could become one of the five areas taking forward an exploration of the feasibility of becoming involved in the development of a House Project.

Resolved:-

1. That Commissioner Bradwell be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That the governance arrangements be clarified to include provision for oversight by non-executive Members.
3. That the Leaving Care Service link to the Scrutiny Review of Modular Housing Solutions to examine how care leavers can be involved in its development
4. That consideration be given to how care leavers with additional needs are included in the project.
5. That the Project Board for young people be established at the earliest opportunity.
6. That consideration be given to how care leavers with additional needs are included in the project.

5. ROTHERHAM LOCAL PLAN - ADOPTION OF THE SITES AND POLICIES DOCUMENT

Consideration was given to a report which recommended approval for the Sites and Policies Document to be referred to Council for formal adoption as part of Rotherham's Local Plan. It was reported that the document had been examined by an independent Planning Inspector and found to be "sound" subject to some changes. The Inspector's final report set out changes, known as Main Modifications.

It was reported that the Sites and Policies Document allocated land to meet the targets for new homes and jobs, fixed in the adopted Core Strategy. Most new development proposed would be focused in the Rotherham Urban Area (including at Bassingthorpe Farm) and the three Principal Settlements for Growth at:

- Wath upon Dearne, Brampton Bierlow, West Melton
- Dinnington, Anston and Laughton Common, and
- Bramley, Wickersley and Ravenfield Common.

Members noted that adoption of the plan would enable the release of the development sites chosen by the Council as the most appropriate to promote the sustainable growth of Rotherham. This would significantly boost the supply of new homes and jobs that Rotherham would need and support the delivery of the Council's Economic Growth Plan and Housing Strategy. It would also help ensure a five year supply of housing land to protect the Council against speculative development on other non-preferred sites. Adoption of the plan would also bring into force the development management policies designed to protect and enhance the environment. Such policy protection was required to complement the plan's growth ambitions and ensure new development was delivered in a sensitive manner.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That specific briefings on major planning developments be provided to ward members on a ward-by-ward basis.
3. That Equality Impact Assessments be explicitly referenced in the cover report of all items submitted for Cabinet and Pre-Decision Scrutiny.

6. FORGE ISLAND DEVELOPMENT

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on the Forge Island Development and sought approval to delegate authority to officers to progress the scheme at pace.

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It was reported that the Council was currently out to the market to secure a development partner for Forge Island. Stage 1 of the process had been completed and the Council had invited three potential development partners to submit detailed development proposals. The deadline for proposals to be received was 29 June 2018.

In order to allow a scheme to progress as quickly as possible it was proposed that the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs & the Local Economy and the Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services, be given the authority to select a development partner from among the bids submitted in June. In addition, it was proposed that the Council complete outstanding property purchases at Riverside Precinct and progress with the flood defence work required for development to take place.

Members sought clarification as to why the decision making for the development had to move at pace. In response, the Strategic Director explained that things moved quickly when projects entered the delivery stage, but there would be a requirement for Member decision making and oversight at various stages and reports would be brought forward at appropriate points.

Assurances were sought in respect of the viability of the development and that the pace of the project was manageable. In response, the Strategic Director acknowledged that circumstances would change quickly and the priority was to remain focused on getting the right offer and branding in place for the town to ensure that private investors bought into that aspiration. Members expressed a clear view that this was a critical decision that would shape the destiny of the town centre for a generation and that it was important that the developers bidding for contracts were clear around what was required.

Members expressed concerns in respect of the proposed delegation of powers to officers and confirmation was provided that the delegation of authority to officers, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, was a legitimate method of decision making and consistent with the Executive Procedure Rules that had been amended by the Council on 23 May 2018.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That Cabinet be recommended to confirm how it will hold decision makers to account for exercising delegated powers in respect of the Forge Island redevelopment aspects of the Town Centre Masterplan.

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3. That the quarterly updates are provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on decision making and the implementation of the project.
4. That the flood alleviation programme be referred to Improving Places as part of its powers to scrutinise flood risk management functions

7. TO DETERMINE ANY ITEM WHICH THE CHAIRMAN IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

The Chair reported that there were no items of business requiring urgent consideration.

8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be held on Wednesday 20 June 2018, commencing at 11.00 a.m., in Rotherham Town Hall.