

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday, 14th October, 2020

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors R. Elliott, Jarvis, Jepson, Keenan, Mallinder, Napper, Taylor, Walsh and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillor Cusworth.

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

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

221. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2020

Resolved: -

That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 16 September 2020 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

222. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

223. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

224. 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 agenda item 7, Towns Fund – Town Investment Plan on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 (financial and business affairs) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

225. LIBRARIES STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 19 October 2020 in respect of the proposed Libraries Strategy 2021 - 26.

The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities, Assistant Director - Culture, Sport and Tourism and the Head of Operations and Business Transformation attended the meeting to present the report.

This report set out the vision and framework contained in the proposed

Library Strategy 2021 – 2026 and detailed how the Strategy, along with the new service offer would enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duty under the Public Library Act and to meet the needs of the community through the delivery of the Libraries and Neighbourhood Hubs Service. The proposed Strategy and service offer had been finalised following feedback from a final phase of consultation, and along with an Equalities Impact Analysis, would underpin all future service delivery changes for Rotherham libraries.

The full Library Strategy 2021-2026 was attached as an appendix to the officer's report.

The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities in introducing the report noted the extensive consultation process that had taken place during the development of the proposed Libraries strategy and the high number of responses received. A comprehensive report and analysis of the consultation responses was included as an appendix to the officer's report. The Cabinet Member noted how much libraries in Rotherham were loved by library users, with the library service receiving a 99.1% customer satisfaction rating from its users.

The Cabinet Member noted how the proposed Libraries Strategy would link in with other strategies including the Rotherham Cultural Strategy and Rotherham's Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy. The Cabinet Member also outlined the strategic outcomes that the strategy would deliver that included:

- Increasing reading and literacy
- Stronger and more resilient communities
- Cultural and creative enrichment
- Improving digital access and literacy
- Helping everyone achieve their full potential
- Healthier and happier lives for residents
- Greater prosperity.

The Cabinet Member noted the proposals for capital investment for Rotherham's libraries and the further development of community partnership activity including a pilot of a community-managed library at Brinsworth and an increased number of volunteer opportunities across the library service.

The Assistant Director - Culture, Sport and Tourism noted the extensive Equalities Impact Assessment that had been completed for the proposed Libraries Strategy and noted the library services' commitment to addressing issues of underrepresentation. The Equalities Impact Assessment was attached as an appendix to the officer's report.

Members welcomed the proposed strategy and noted the important role that libraries played across the Borough as community hubs. Members also noted with approval the large numbers of Rotherham residents that

were active library users.

Members noted the issues that had been highlighted in the report regarding the underrepresentation of BAME groups in accessing and using library services, and asked why this may, as well as for information on what actions were being planned to address the issue. The Cabinet Member advised that BAME groups may, for various reasons feel that the library service was not for them, but did note that the location of libraries was crucial, and that more BAME people had used the old Central Library than the current one at Riverside House, and as such the plan to relocate the Central Library would help address this problem. The Head of Operations and Business Transformation advised that the library was engaged with groups that represented BAME residents and that work would be carried out to establish specific actions to increase BAME use of the library service.

The Assistant Director - Culture, Sport and Tourism noted the action plan that was contained within the Equalities Impact Assessment that would address the challenges of engaging BAME communities with the library service, as well as the partnership work that was being carried out with organisations including Voluntary Action Rotherham and Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance. The Assistant Director assured members that the barriers that BAME communities experienced would be addressed so as to ensure that libraries were accessible, welcoming and offered activities that were appealing to all Rotherham residents.

The Cabinet Member expressed her thanks to the Head of Operations and Business Transformation for the huge amount of work that she had put into the consultation process for the strategy and also thanked the Assistant Director - Culture, Sport and Tourism, and all the team members that had been involved in the development of the proposed strategy and accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment.

The Assistant Director provided information on the activities that were taking place across the library service during October 2020 in connection with Black History Month and noted that staff across the library service would also be receiving training on equality issues and unconscious bias and discrimination.

Members noted their support for libraries acting as community hubs that brought other services into library buildings but noted the challenges that this created for library accommodation, especially at Dinnington and asked whether there were any plans to extend Dinnington Library. The Head of Operations advised that there were no plans to extend Dinnington Library but noted that there were plans for improvements to be made to the facilities at that library.

Members noted the issue that had been identified regarding young people aged 11+ being less engaged with the library service and asked what plans there were to address the issue. The Assistant Director advised that

it was essential for the future of the library service that young people were engaged with and advised that partnership work with schools and the Children and Young People's Directorate would be used to engage young people with the library service. The Assistant Director also noted that while the library service offered many activities for children aged five to 11, the service was looking to expand activities that catered for children under five, as this age group were not currently as well catered for as older children.

Members noted the increasing role of volunteers with the library service and sought further information on the role of volunteers. The Head of Operations advised that volunteers were used to supplement the work delivered by paid staff and that volunteer opportunities were an important way of upskilling young people, noting that volunteering had enabled some volunteers to progress into paid positions within the service.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities, Assistant Director - Culture, Sport and Tourism and the Head of Operations and Business Transformation for attending the meeting and for answering members' questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

226. TOWNS FUND - TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 19 October 2020 in respect of the Towns Fund – Town Investment Plan.

The Assistant Director for Planning - Regeneration and Transport attended the meeting to present the report.

The Assistant Director for Planning, Regeneration and Transport advised that the Town Deal was a £3.6bn programme seeking to “unleash the economic potential” of 100 places across the country, with Rotherham having been given the opportunity to bid for up to £25million through the programme. It was noted further that the government had advised that bids of up to £50m would be considered in exceptional circumstances for the most ambitious and credible projects. The report stated that the fund would focus investment on three main areas of activity, urban regeneration, skills and enterprise and infrastructure, and that the ‘bid’ for funding would be a Town Investment Plan.

The Assistant Director advised that a requirement for participation in the Town Deal programme had been for the Council to set up an overarching Town Deal Board, and that as such, a board had been established in January 2020. The Assistant Director noted that the Town Deal Board served both as an advisory body and also enabled the vision and strategy

for the town to be defined in order for the Town Investment Plan to be produced.

The Assistant Director advised that the Town Deal would be an agreement in principle between government, the Council and the Town Deal Board that would set out a vision and strategy for the town, detailing the underlying interventions needed to achieve the vision being set out in the Town Investment Plan. It was noted that the Town Investment Plan would be a long-term strategic plan for the town and that it would also set out a vision for Rotherham with a clear strategy and direction for the economic turnaround of the town over a decade.

The Assistant Director advised that the Town Deal study area included Eastwood, Templeborough and the town centre. The report provided information on the type of schemes that were being considered for each area that included:

Eastwood

- Upgraded link to Parkgate
- Improved connectivity at St Anne's roundabout
- Environmental improvements at Fitzwilliam Rd
- a New housing development at York Rd Netherfield Court and other areas Refurbishment of selected properties and landscape improvements

Templeborough

- Urban Agriculture
- Business park and innovation centre
- Bridge link to Blackburn Meadows
- Connectivity improvements to Sheffield Rd, Ickles Roundabout and Bessemer Way Route cleaning and maintenance
- Improved wayfinding and signage

Central and Town centre

- Linked water side development sites for residential and supporting uses to create a Riverside community
- Outdoor green spaces, squares and water to support, leisure, evening and food and drink diversification
- Improvements for retail
- Gateway improvements.

A full list of proposed schemes was attached as an appendix to the officer's report. The Assistant Director advised that the final list of proposed schemes contained in the Town Investment Plan would be determined following further consultation, planning and development work.

Members welcomed the proposals contained in the Town Investment Plan. Members noted with approval the number of proposed crossings

over the River Don that would be created for pedestrian and cycle use as the proposed crossings would increase accessibility to the town centre and link into the other town centre development schemes that the council was pursuing.

Members noted that there was a lack of detail in the report regarding the projects. The Assistant Director advised that Plan was currently a work in progress and that the plans would be developed further by the Town Deal Board, who would also consider which projects were included in the final bid.

Members asked that as some considered that pedestrianised areas could have a negative impact on businesses in town centres, whether there were any plans to open up more roads for vehicle access. The Assistant Director advised that the Town Centre Plan did not include any such proposals but noted that pedestrianised areas and vehicle access issues were being looked at and would be addressed in other potential schemes.

Members asked for assurance that full consultation on the proposals was taking place. The Assistant Director advised that due to restrictions related to the pandemic traditional methods of consultation had difficult to facilitate, but assured members that consultation activity was taking place and that the Town Deal Board was playing an active role in engaging with the groups that it's members represented on the proposals detailed in the Town Centre Plan. The Chair asked whether consultation on the proposals had taken place with ward members for the areas included in the proposals. The Assistant Director advised that some consultation had taken place and that further consultation would take place as the plans were developed further.

Members asked if there was a back up plan to move some of the proposals forward if the bid was not successful. The Assistant Director advised that contingency plans were in place that would enable alternate or amended improvements to be implemented for the designated areas.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Planning, Regeneration and Transport for attending the meeting and for answering members' questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

227. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1ST OCTOBER TO 31ST DECEMBER, 2020

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 October – 31 December 2020.

Resolved: -

That the Forward Plan be noted.

228. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

229. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

230. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: -

That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 11am on Wednesday 4 November 2020 as Microsoft Teams meeting.