

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 15 June 2022

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors T. Collingham, Baum-Dixon, A Carter, Cooksey, Elliott, Pitchley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Baker-Rogers and Tinsley.

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

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

46. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 16 MARCH 2022 AND 20 APRIL 2022

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 16 March and 20 April 2022 be approved as a true record.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

48. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were none.

49. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were none.

50. FINANCE UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance introduced the report explaining it provided an update on financial matters following on from approval of the budget. It also provided an interim update on the financial outturn prior to the full report being considered by Cabinet in July.

The outturn position reflected positive movement of £4.1m in the directorates outturn positions since the December financial monitoring position. The main reason for the movements within directorates were indicated within the report.

This positive improvement removed the need for Council to use £1.7m of the budgeted financial reserves to support the outturn position. The improvements within the directorates forecast outturn represented a positive direction of travel for the Council's finances, with levels of costs reducing across many of the key service areas and income generation

beginning to recover post Covid. This prudent financial management will be important in managing future budget pressures.

This was a strong outturn position that included a positive trend of cost reductions within some of the Council's key services and an increase in £2.4m in budgeted financial reserves. This placed the Council in a more robust position heading into the 2022/23 financial year and therefore better able to mitigate against any cost pressures that were not evident at the time of setting the budget, such as the war in Ukraine, the significant rise in energy prices and inflation. This financial position will allow the Council to better manage the impact rather than making cuts to services. It was expected that the period of high inflation would last for two years before returning to normal levels.

The Assistant Director of Financial Services explained the £2.4m transfer to the reserves was a positive position but it was clarified that the finance pressures that the Council was facing, such as the war in Ukraine and specific Rotherham issues such as the Home to School Transport pressures would be in excess therefore Financial Services were working on a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) review, to understand what a revised MTFS would look like. The report also covered a number of updated on key grants the Council was receiving.

In response to a query regarding the Energy Rebate payments it was clarified that the cheque provided in the first instance contained a range of options regarding how it could be processed along with providing options for the cheque to be returned to the Council in order to be paid directly into a bank account rather than cashing the cheque or for it to be issued in another name along with an option to contact the Council for further information. It was clarified that a small number of people had come forward requesting a cash payment. Upon further discussions it was suggested that if future energy rebate schemes became available that the Council ensure options for Energy Rebate payments are more widely published in an easy-to-read format.

It was clarified that the Council had provided residents with the ability to provide the Council with their bank details to enable the energy rebate to be paid straight into their accounts however residents are not obligated to pay their Council tax via direct debit.

It was clarified that the budget position set for 2021/22 assumed a use of originally of £7.5m budget strategy reserve. This was reduced through financial monitoring with the updated report for 2022/23 indicated that there would be a planned use of £1.7m however due to the improvement of the outturn position the Council did not need to utilise any of the £1.7m. The Council had not used any of the planned £7.5m which would be carried forward to the new financial year. A section of the report covered understands that had been achieved through service delivery across a number of the directorates however a key element of the outturn position was the Council's ability to use emergency Covid funding that it had

received during 2021/22 enabling the Council not to use its core reserves.

The positive trends highlighted within the report were welcomed. It was understood that Covid recovery would sit within the background of financial monitoring for some years to come however some directorates were seeing a return to pre-covid trends however there were challenges that lay ahead.

It was reported that there had been instances where food parcels had been provided rather than the receipt of a Free School Meals voucher, to enable people to have the choice of what to buy. It was understood that vouchers were issued rather than parcels however the specific incident reference would be considered outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. In future that the Council ensure options for Council Tax (energy) Rebate payments are more widely published in an easy-to-read format.

51. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY (2022/2025), ACTION PLAN (2022/2023) AND ANNUAL REPORT (2021/2022)

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance introduced the report explaining that the Council Plan has set out its ambition to create an inclusive borough for people to live, work and enjoy. A borough where no one was left behind, where all were welcomed and treated fairly, which became even more important in the face of cost of living increases and the impact of Covid which had disadvantaged some groups. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy supports this ambition however considerable progress had already been made over recent years and each year the Council reported its progress on its equalities journey. This was last reviewed by OSMB in June 2021.

The Annual Report for 2021/22 set out the scene in terms of progress made and the next steps required along with including a series of case studies that indicated the real differences the Council had made. The Council had to publish its equality objectives setting out how it met its public sector equality duties however Council has decided to go further by producing a strategy that supports the Council Plan by looking at what has been committed to in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion. The action plan sets out the Council's commitments to ensure that equality objectives are embedded in everything it does along with achieving the highest standards in equalities for local government. The objectives within the action plan had been widely consulted upon over a 5-week period. As a result of the consultation the objectives had been reshaped and aligned more directly with the equality framework.

The approach adopted reduces duplication and the action planning

process would be repeated each year and reported through the normal processes.

It was a positive report however it was suggested that options within the consultation documents should include the option of non-binary and provide a wider range of options rather than just Mr and Mrs etc. It was noted that the Council could engage with more people who have that lived experience.

The number of objectives and achievements listed in the report were noted however it was queried how this matched against the public's perception and experiences.

The peer review progress was noted and it was clarified that the timescales regarding this had changed due to Covid however it was felt that the Council should aim for excellence. The Assistant Chief Executive explained that the Council had a comprehensive action plan to work towards achieving excellent however the framework was changed around December with a view to received more evidenced outcome of impacts, such as the lived experience, rather than the organisations commitment to completing the objectives.

Members felt that the equality impact assessments completed as part of projects did not cover the full issues or indicate how the proposed changes would impact specific groups. The Assistant Chief Executive indicated there were pockets of best practice across the services where people really understood how best to present the information, how to assess the impacts and how to mitigate them appropriately. These were being identified with a view to being shared as best practice for continual development across the organisation. It was clarified that equalities had been built into the service planning process for this year.

There was a concern that certain groups were not being consulted with because they were unable to access IT services. It was explained that along with the online and written questionnaires, focus groups were held, along with information being placed in the libraries with assistance being provided by staff to complete them if needed. Several facilitated sessions were held to help people completed the forms. Further work was also being undertaken regarding the ward bulletins and neighbourhood groups and through the neighbourhood co-ordinators. There will always be more things that can be done to improve how people can engage and be engaged with.

There was a need to be mindful of recent consultations, trying to incorporate those views where possible and avoid duplications. It was felt that consultation with residents of the borough should be embedded throughout the Council.

The Chair said that the Council had come a long way in terms of how consultation is carried out and welcomed that it was recognised that there

was further work to be done in terms of understanding how consultation should be conducted with wider and different sections of the community.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That consideration is given to how equalities is presented in Council reports going forward.

52. TO REVIEW THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OSMB FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF THE RSCP BOARD REVIEW

Members from OSMB and Improving Lives Select Commission met jointly on 27 May 2022 and received the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership CSE Review Final Report. Members of OSMB who were not in attendance at that meeting now have the opportunity to consider the recommendations as listed below:

Resolved: That it was agreed the recommendations relating to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership - CSE Review Final Report as listed below:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the Member and Democratic Support Panel, in conjunction with each of the Council's political groups draws up proposals in order to co-ordinate the training plan with regard to CSE and to maximise member attendance at training events.
- 3) That work be carried out with the Borough's Town and Parish Council's to raise Town and Parish Councillors awareness around issues related to CSE.
- 4) That as part of the overall scrutiny work programming processes that clear expectations are set to determine which reports will come to the Improving Lives Select Commission and that there is full partnership engagement with regard to these reports (including on health check issues).
- 5) That scrutiny carries out further work to examine the link between poverty and deprivation and all issues related to children's safeguarding, and in particular to issues around CSE.
- 6) That clear plans, with defined timescales be developed in order to increase awareness and confidence with regard to issues surrounding CSE be developed in consultation with all partners.
- 7) That clear plans, with defined timescales be developed in order to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to how the "voice of the survivor" is taken into account of and listened to across the partnership.
- 8) That work is carried out across the partnership to provide clarity with regard to processes surrounding the reporting of and escalation of concerns regarding CSE.
- 9) That work is carried out across the partnership to provide clarity with regard to processes regarding performance monitoring around CSE.

53. OPERATION LINDEN

The Chair explained that this item was to consider the monitoring arrangements to follow progress on the implementation of the IOPC recommendations regarding Operation Linden.

It was important that Members understood that this review sat within a much larger framework of reviews to understand its history.

The benefits of attending the Child Matters training session were highlighted. This course was open for all social workers and school staff to apply to attend.

The Chair suggested that a small monitoring group of 2-3 members be convened from members of OSMB with a view to reporting back to the main Board meetings at regular intervals. It was also suggested that the monitoring group be politically balanced. It was also suggested that a report be brought back to the main Board meetings every 6 to 12 months for consideration.

Resolved: It was agreed that a monitoring group of at least 3 Members, politically balanced, be formed from Members of OSMB to follow progress on the implementation of the IOPC recommendations with a view to reporting back to OSMB at regular intervals to be determined.

54. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme, where upon it was suggested that a joint meeting or briefing be arranged with members of OSMB and the Improving Lives Select Commission to discuss Rothercard. This item would be discussed with the relevant Cabinet Member before a decision was taken on how to progress.

The following items were suggested for inclusion:

- That the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking items be considered in September.
- That the Cost-of-Living crisis, which would include foodbanks and the energy crisis along with other aspects.
- That the Census, which was last considered in September 2012 and again in April 2013 be added.
- That the Council motion on the Nature Crisis be included.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved with the following amendments:

- Modern Slavery – to be considered by OSMB in September
- Foodbank Provision – to be considered as part of a wider consideration of the Cost-of-Living Crisis
- Nature Emergency – to be added in response to the Council Motion in May 2022.

- Census – to be added.

55. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

The Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission explained the Commission considered the Annual Report on Child Exploitation at its recent meeting. The report was well presented with lots of positive feedback, information and discussions. A joint session on Children's mental health will be arranged with the Health Select Commission. Education Recovery was also included as an item on the work programme.

The Chair of the Health Select Commission explained they had considered the quality accounts of RDASH and the NHS Trust and had finalised these in the previous week.

Resolved: That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board noted the update.

56. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 JUNE 2022 - 31 AUGUST 2022

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 June 2022 - 31 August 2022.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

57. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

58. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

59. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 10am on Wednesday 6 July 2022 at Rotherham Town Hall.