

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 5 July 2023

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Bacon, Browne, Cooksey, Miro, Wyatt, Yasseen and Tinsley.

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

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

13. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 14 June 2023 be approved as a true record.

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Tinsley declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as the owner of properties in an area of selective licensing. (Item 9 – Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Impact of Selective Licencing). He remained in the meeting but did not participate in the debate or vote.

15. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no exempt items.

17. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2022-23

The Assistant Director for Finance introduced the report, which contained a more detailed outline position report to that considered by the Committee at its previous meeting.

It was noted that the outturn position of £7.3m was an improvement on the projected overspend in February of approximately £8.3 - 8.5m.

As agreed previously by Council, the overspend would be covered by the use of reserves. It was noted that the financial position had improved significantly from September's earlier projection of £18.2m overspend. Savings had been made across all directorates, however there had been a notable reduction in the cost to the Council of placements in Adult Social Care which had contributed to the savings.

A series of short-term temporary savings had been made to reduce the

impact of inflation pressures in the 2022- 23 financial year. The bulk of the residual overspend related to those inflationary pressures and energy prices as outlined.

The report also covered the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) position which had significantly improved and the Council continued to work with the Department for Education's Safety Valve Programme to reduce the deficit.

The Chair invited questions from Members of the Board and a discussion on the following issues ensued:

- Further clarification was sought on what funding was available from the Home Office to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. A briefing would be circulated to the Board.
- It was noted that Facilities Services were experiencing pressures as a result of rising food prices affecting school meals. Assurance was sought that this would not have a negative impact on the nutritional quality of the meals. The Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment confirmed that the quality of food had not been affected, however it was outlined that inflationary pressures and supply chain issues had been challenging. It was noted that many Rotherham families may struggle to pay for school meals. Further details were provided on changes to suppliers.
- Further details were requested in what mitigations were in place for families who may not qualify for free school meals but who may need support. It was outlined that consideration was given to the cost of meals to minimise the impact on families.
- Clarification was sought on the slippage relating to replacement fire doors. It was outlined that over 1000 doors had been installed and the contractors had provided assurance that the programme would be completed within this current financial year. Work was being undertaken to engage with tenants and residents to address delays.
- It was outlined that the underspend related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) related to circumstantial slippage in the capital programme.
- It was noted that considerable effort had gone into reducing the overspend in the budget for Child and Young People's Services over the recent years.
- It was clarified that inflationary pressures and rising fuel costs had been assigned to Central Services rather than individual directorates.
- Clarification was sought on the underspend related to Ward

Housing Hubs. A response would be provided in writing.

- Further details were sought on ward projects and if a full breakdown could be provided.

Resolved:

- 1) That Cabinet be advised that the following recommendations be supported:

That Cabinet:

1. Note the revenue outturn position.
2. Note the budgeted transfer to HRA reserves increased by £2.1m following the revenue and capital outturn positions.
3. Note the carry forward of the combined schools balance of £2.992m in accordance with the Department for Education regulations.
4. Note the reduced DSG deficit following receipt of Safety Valve funding, as set out in paragraph 2.14.
5. Note the reserves position set out in paragraphs 2.51 to 2.62.
6. Note the capital outturn and funding position as set out in paragraphs 2.63 to 2.92.
7. Note the revised Capital Programme following year end 2022/23 as set out in paragraphs 2.93 to 2.97 and appendices 1 to 4 of this report.

18. EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair invited the Head of Policy, Performance, and Intelligence and Assistant Director of Human Resources to introduce the report. It was noted that the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance had submitted his apologies.

It was outlined that publication of the Annual Report was part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. The purpose of the report was to highlight the progress made over the previous year towards the equalities, diversity and inclusion agendas and outlining next steps.

The Annual Report was aligned to the following themes outlined in the Equalities Framework for Local Government. It was noted that there was a target that the Council would achieve 'excellent' status under this framework by 2025.

An overview of activity was given against each theme:

- **Theme 1: Understanding, listening to, and working with Rotherham's Communities.** Examples were given equalities data was collected and analysed to inform understanding of the breadth of communities in the borough.

- **Theme 2: Providing Leadership and Organisational Commitment to Actively Promote Equalities.** This theme demonstrated how the Council's leadership is positively promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the borough.
- **Theme 3: Delivering Accessible and Responsive Services that Meet Diverse Needs.** This theme showed how effective planning and service delivery across the Council ensures services were accessible to all customers.
- **Theme 4: Ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce.** The Council continued to improve workplace equality and diversity through the delivery of the Workforce Plan 2022-2025.

Equalities action plan 2023/24

Alongside the report, the Equality Action plan identified workstreams from the Council Plan's Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2023/23.

Major areas of work for the forthcoming year included:

- Refreshing ward profiles to update and improve the data available at the local level.
- An action plan for digital inclusion.
- Work with partners to deliver the Council Plan commitments to tackle inequality and disadvantage.
- Improve workplace equality and diversity through the delivery of the Workforce Plan 2022-2025.

The Chair invited questions from the Board and a discussion of the following issues ensued:

- Clarification was sought on staff representation networks and if consideration had been given to forming a men's network, citing the success of 'Andy's Man Club'. It was outlined that networks were employee-led, and those referenced were based on employees with protected characteristics. Should there be a request to set up additional networks, support could be provided to facilitate their running.
- It was noted that there was a commitment to achieve 'excellent' status under the LGA Equalities Framework by 2025. Further details were sought on how equalities were prioritised within the authority, whether achieving 'excellent' was achievable and what improvements had been made since the authority was awarded 'development' status in 2017 and if progress had stalled. It was outlined that the Council had embedded equalities, diversity and inclusion in each of its plans. It was also outlined that the framework had changed, which had meant that Council's were required additional criteria to evidence outcomes under the standards. It was noted that other local authorities had revised deadlines to achieve 'excellent' status under the new framework. The Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment gave examples of how equalities were prioritised within Culture, Sport and Tourism, demonstrating how progress was being made.

- Further details were sought on how services adapted how they communicated with groups such as learning-disabled people. The Interim Assistant Director for Strategic Commissioning outlined that Rotherham had a strong advocacy service and drew upon the lived experience of individuals and their families and carers to feed into service development and improvement. The Chair noted that the Board has agreed to undertake a review of consultation and engagement which would be scheduled later in the year.
- Details were sought on whether the Council had diversity targets in recruitment processes. It was outlined that the Workforce Strategy had targets in relation to representation of certain groups such as young workers and disabled employees. Examples were given of how the Council was working with partners to widen recruitment and engagement. It was outlined that the targets were based on benchmarking with other local authorities and data based on local working population. It was noted that Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers were under-represented at 4% of the workplace. It was outlined that in respect of employment targets, there was not a requirement on employees to declare if they had protected characteristics, therefore, the actual numbers may be higher. Assurance was given that processes to recruit under-represented groups would not discriminate against other applicants and that recruitment was fair and transparent.
- It was noted that the case studies referencing women's sport illustrated the equalities agenda positively. Further details were sought to establish how receiving the 'Most Improved Council' award had contributed specifically to the equality and diversity agenda as the case study had not referenced any groups or communities with protected characteristics. It was felt that future case studies in future annual reports should explicitly reference the contribution they had made to the equality's agenda.

Resolved:

- 1) That Cabinet be advised that the following recommendations be supported.

That Cabinet:

- a. Note the progress made over the past 12 months towards the equalities agenda.
 - b. Note the next steps outlined within the Equalities Annual Report and action plan for 2023/24.
- 2) That case studies in future annual reports should reference explicitly how they contribute to the equality, diversity and inclusion agendas.

19. ANNUAL REPORT ON COUNCIL PLAN AND YEAR AHEAD DELIVERY PLAN PROGRESS FOR 2022-2023.

The Chair invited the Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence to present the report. Also in attendance for this item were the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services, the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment; the Assistant Director, Early Help, CYPS; the Interim Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning, ACHPH; and the Assistant Director, Human Resources, ACE.

The report provided Members with an annual update on the delivery of the Council Plan and the final report on the Year Ahead Delivery Plan for 2022-2023. The report focused on the progress made since April 2022 against the 92 actions and milestones in the Year Ahead Delivery Plan. It also included Quarter 4 performance data on the 66 Council Plan performance measures. As in previous quarters, Appendix 1 of the report included a high-level overview along with a note of achievements and challenges, Year Ahead Delivery Plan trackers and performance scorecards. As with previous reports, it also included case studies and a timeline of key achievements/activities.

Following feedback from OSMB Members the progress report brought together the achievements and challenges into a single section, providing a summary of overall progress across our Council Plan themes.

It was noted that good progress was made in 2022-2023 on the activities within the Year Ahead Delivery Plan. In total 80% (74) of the activities were completed with a further 7% (6) on track for delivery after 31 March 2023. 3 actions were delayed by less than 3 months and 9 actions would not be met within 3 months of the original target date.

The report also included performance information on the 66 performance measures contained within the Council Plan. The performance measures show that the number of measures hitting their target was only 50% of those measured (44% overall as 12% do not have targets). In total, 29 performance measures had hit their target for the year (50% of those with targets) and 29 did not hit their target. There were 28 performance measures where performance improved during the year and 28 where it fell compared to the previous year. This was a better position than at quarter 3 where only 24 measures were on track to hit their targets. Management were taking action to address areas where performance needed to improve, and it was expected that more targets will be hit in the course of 2023-24 as a result.

Future Reporting

It was noted that there would be two public monitoring reports during 2023-2024.

The Chair invited questions from the Board and a discussion on the

following issues ensued:

- Clarification was sought on the process of safe discharge from hospital. It was outlined that health colleagues followed strict protocols and there was an integrated discharged team to ensure smooth transition between hospital, social care and community services. Further details were requested on what safeguards were in place in case discharge was not appropriate. It was outlined that assessments were undertaken to ensure that individuals were stabilised in their care setting and assurance given that action would be taken if individuals were not safe and well. Assurance was given that the care needs of individuals were assessed and those requiring residential care would be supported appropriately.
- Further details were requested on engagement with domestic abuse services which appeared to be significantly below target. It was noted that there were two different referral processes which was not captured under the existing definition. Examples were given by Board Members of residents having difficulties accessing services. A briefing would be provided to Improving Lives Select Commission.
- In respect of workforce development, it was noted that the current targets based on working population did not take account of census data that had been published recently. It was outlined that the targets would be revised now the data was available.
- Further details were sought on homelessness and the work being undertaken to reduce use of hotels as temporary accommodation. It was outlined that the Cabinet had recently approved a Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy. It was noted that the service was experiencing pressures relating to cost-of-living, insecurity in the private rented sector and more people with complex needs. It was outlined that Members would receive a briefing outlining actions in the Autumn.
- Clarification was sought on the delay in developing and delivering a programme of consultation and engagement on the future, supported accommodation offer for those with learning disabilities and autism. In response it was outlined that the strategy had been delayed in order to ensure that the engagement captured the lived experience of service users and carers. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in February 2024.
- Further details were sought on whether pavements were included in the performance target on the numbers of unclassified roads classed as 'green' status. It was clarified that footways were not included in this measure. It was noted that Improving Places Select Commission have raised the issue of improvements to footways and pavements with the relevant Cabinet Member.

- An explanation was requested on the decrease in the proportion of waste sent for reuse or recycling. It was outlined that the amount of reusable waste increased during the pandemic. It was noted that the new contract for Household Waste Recycling sites would start in the autumn. It was anticipated that levels of recycling and reuse would improve.
- The timeline for the refreshed Early Help Strategy was outlined with it being submitted to Cabinet early in 2024.
- In respect of Community Protection Notices, details were sought about the rapid improvement in performance in quarter 4. It was outlined that the service had recruited staff to undertake preventative and enforcement activity, including issuing warnings and fines. Assurance was given that performance would be monitored.

Resolved:

- 1) That Cabinet be advised that the following recommendations be supported:

That Cabinet note:

1. The overall position in relation to the Year Ahead Delivery Plan activities.
2. The Quarter 4 2022-23 data for the Council Plan performance measures.
3. The performance reporting timetable for the remainder of the 2022-2023 year.

20. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS – IMPACT OF SELECTIVE LICENSING

The Chair invited the Chair of Improving Places Select Commission to introduce the report.

The review focussed on the impact of selective licensing at its mid-point. Members whose wards included selective licensing areas were asked to give evidence to the review and the impact of the scheme. Landlords, housing staff and police gave evidence to the review. He outlined that there were a large number of housing units in the areas covered by selective licensing, including areas of high social deprivation. The purpose of the review was to see how the scheme had contributed to raising housing standards.

A series of recommendation were made focussing on staffing issues; targeting resources and clarifying the purpose of the scheme. It was noted that despite best efforts, it had been difficult to engage with tenants.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Board Members. The review was welcomed, particularly its focus on safety and health of tenants.

Resolved:

- 1) That the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and response.
 - a) That reinspection be prioritised for landlords whose properties have required action previously.
 - b) Due to the shortage of experienced inspectors, that consideration be given to how the Council may support recruitment and development of trainee inspectors and retention of experienced inspectors.
 - c) That consideration be given to incentivising responsible landlords, and, where there is a proven track record, empowering landlords to self-assess, provided that the Service can still obtain assurances that decent standards are maintained.
 - d) That consideration be given to managing expectations around selective licencing as a measure focused on the health of residents rather than beautification or regeneration.
 - e) That consideration be given to how uptake of the cost-of-living support offer among families in selective licencing areas may be further promoted and monitored with a view to identifying gaps and promoting financial inclusion.
 - f) Given the complexity of measuring impact on deprivation and difficulty in improving relative levels of deprivation, that consideration be given to how internal metrics may better reflect the real impact of the scheme.
 - g) That a joined-up approach be sought with relevant Council strategies and services, with partner and voluntary sector organisations and with resident-led initiatives prior to any future selective licencing declaration.
 - h) That engagement with landlords and with tenants be considered alongside any response to the above recommendations, and that the response to the above recommendations be subject to the learning derived from continued engagement with landlords and tenants.
- 2) That Cabinet respond to the recommendations by November 2023,

in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

21. DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT (2022-23)

The Senior Governance Adviser introduced the annual report, outlining that it had been circulated for comments previously. It would be submitted to Council at its meeting of 19 July 2023.

The report was an overview of activity of OSMB and Select Commissions over the 2022-23 municipal year, with outcomes aligned to the Council plan themes.

The Chair thanked officers for compiling the report.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

22. WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Governance Advisor introduced the draft work programme as detailed in Appendix 1-4.

The work programme had been informed by discussions with Chairs/Vice-Chairs, link officers and existing commitments inherited from the 2022/23 programme. It had also included for the first time, reference to issues raised at the scrutiny strategy day held on April 26, 2023. It was outlined that the work programmes remained dynamic and responsive to items which may arise (for example referral of petitions or actions arising from Council Motions).

Arising from the workshop was a consensus on adopting criteria to long/short list commission's respective priorities using the following principles:

- What are the key issues?
- What is the outcome that we want?

Agree principles for longlisting:

- Can scrutiny add value or influence?
- Is it being looked at elsewhere?
- Is it a priority – council or community?

Developing a consistent shortlisting criteria e.g.

- T: Time: is it the tight time, enough resources?
- O: Others: is this duplicating the work of another body?
- P: Performance: can scrutiny make a difference
- I: Interest – what is the interest to the public?
- C: Contribution to the corporate plan

The Chair invited questions and comments and the following issues were added to the programme:

- Domestic abuse – Improving Lives Select Commission
- 2021 Census Findings – OSMB

Resolved: -

- 1) That the Work Programmes be approved.
- 2) That the criteria for selecting issues for scrutiny's consideration be endorsed.

23. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

There were no updates.

24. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

25. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

26. 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 2 August 2023 at Rotherham Town Hall.