

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

**Date and Time :-** Wednesday 13 September 2023 at 10.00 a.m.  
**Venue:-** Rotherham Town Hall, Moorgate Street, Rotherham.  
**Membership:-** Councillors Clark (Chair), Bacon (Vice-Chair), Baker-Rogers, Ball, Browne, Cooksey, Elliott, Miro, Pitchley, Tinsley, Wyatt and Yasseen.

This meeting will be webcast live and will be available to view [via the Council's website](#). The items which will be discussed are described on the agenda below and there are reports attached which give more details.

Rotherham Council advocates openness and transparency as part of its democratic processes. Anyone wishing to record (film or audio) the public parts of the meeting should inform the Chair or Governance Advisor of their intentions prior to the meeting.

### AGENDA

**1. Apologies for Absence**

To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend the meeting.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 July 2023 and 2 August 2023 (Pages 5 - 25)**

To consider the minutes of the previous meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 5 July 2023 and 2 August 2023 and to approve them as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

To receive declarations of interest from Members in respect of items listed on the agenda.

**4. Questions from Members of the Public and the Press**

To receive questions relating to items of business on the agenda from members of the public or press who are present at the meeting.

**5. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.

## **Items for Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

In accordance with the outcome of the Governance Review in 2016, the following items are submitted for pre-scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 18 September 2023. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are invited to comment and make recommendations on the proposals contained within the report.

### **6. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan (Pages 27 - 62)**

Report from the Assistant Chief Executive.

#### **Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

1. Note the observations and key recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Team to the Council.
2. Approve the high-level action plan which is the Council's response to the findings.

### **7. Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (Pages 63 - 108)**

Report from the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services.

#### **Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the work undertaken to date as part of the Digital Inclusion programme.
2. Endorse the co-designed Digital Inclusion Strategy and support the approach being taken to help people and communities who are most at risk from digital exclusion.

### **8. July 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report (Pages 109 - 136)**

Report from the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services.

#### **Recommendations:**

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £4.5m.
2. Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2023/24 financial position.

3. Approve the capital budget variations as detailed in section 2.61 of the report.

**For Information/Monitoring:-**

**9. Work Programme (Pages 137 - 138)**

To consider the Board's Work Programme.

**10. Work in Progress - Select Commissions**

To receive updates from the Chairs of the Select Commission on work undertaken and planned for the future.

**11. Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 1 September 2023 to 30 November 2023 (Pages 139 - 150)**

To review and identify items for pre-decision scrutiny from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions covering the period from 1 September 2023 to 30 November 2023.

**12. Call-in Issues**

To consider any issues referred for call-in from recent Cabinet meetings.

**13. Urgent Business**

To determine any item which the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

**14. Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held on 11 October 2023 at 10.00am at Rotherham Town Hall.



SHARON KEMP,  
Chief Executive.

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**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.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**  
**Wednesday 2 August 2023**

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

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

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

**27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Pitchley referred to her Register of Interest, declaring her employment as a Consultant for Rotherham Pioneers, in relation to Minute 18 – UK Shared Prosperity Fund – years two and three. She remained present and participated in the proceedings and vote.

**28. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

There were no questions from the public and press.

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

Agenda Item No. 6 (Rotherham Markets & Library Redevelopment - Appendix 2) was exempt from the press and public:-

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 paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of such Act indicated, as now amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 (information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual/financial information).

Resolved:-That members of the press and public be excluded for this item.

**30. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND - YEARS TWO AND THREE**

The Chair invited the Chief Executive to introduce the report. She outlined that the UKSPF was a three-year government funded programme channelled through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), introduced as a successor fund to the European Structural Funds (ESF).

It was noted that the UKSPF replaced the funding available through ESF, albeit at a lower level. The regional allocation for South Yorkshire equated

to £38.9 million over three years, compared with €410 million from 2007-2013 and €180 million between 2014 – 2020.

Rotherham's allocation of the UKSPF was £7.2 million from April 2022 to March 2025. Of this £5.6 million was allocated to revenue funding with the remaining £1.6 million allocated to capital projects. £6.4 million was available in years two and three.

All funding allocated under the fund had to meet and eligibility criteria which was signed off by Government in late 2022. The criteria were aligned to the following themes:

- Supporting local business
- People and skills
- Community and place

The report and appendices listed the activity and programmes supported by the fund.

It was noted that the timescales attached to the funding was extremely tight, therefore South Yorkshire partners had looked pragmatically at developing proposals to avoid disruption to services and businesses and loss of key staff. It was outlined that some of the projects would have come to an end had this funding not been available. The use of the funding would ensure that priority schemes could be delivered, especially in the context of cost-of-living inflationary increases. Examples were given of integrated working such as Employment Solutions which were having a positive impact on those people needing additional support to access employment.

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

Further details were sought on how year one funding was reported. It was outlined that details were reported in the financial update, however because of the amount of detail and the significance of years two and three funding this was reported to Cabinet in a stand-alone paper.

Clarification was requested on how partnerships and agencies were selected and if there was sufficient capacity for programmes to be rolled out wider (e.g. Open Arms). It was outlined that a mapping exercise had been undertaken with voluntary-community sector partners to identify what activity was already underway in the borough. This had identified communities where the greatest need of support was required, including local infrastructure. The aim was to target funding where the greatest impact could be made in line with the criteria. It was noted that projects in some wards may not access funding although the Council continued to explore new funding streams to support future targeted work.

Further details were requested about business incubation centres and

how success was measured. The Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment outlined that there were four business incubation centres in Rotherham. Referrals were received from business networks such as the Chamber of Commerce, colleges or self-referrals. What differentiated incubation centres from managed-only workspace was the wraparound support and advice to start-ups and links into research, development and wider networks. Success was measured on the rate of business survival. It was outlined that capital investment would be used to enhance available technology and workspaces.

Further details were sought about the rationale for allocation of funding and if there was any discretion for greater investment, particularly in respect of the theme relating to people and skills. It was felt that this was a critical area in Rotherham as there were gaps in the workforce in respect of skills and education. It was clarified that the South Yorkshire Investment Plan agreed with Government at the end of 2022 had stipulated the allocation according to theme.

Further details were required about the number targeted under the programme and if the investment would make the impact needed, particularly for young people. It was outlined that Employment Solutions worked with people who were furthest away from employment, providing significant wraparound support for those who could not access mainstream models. It was noted that the employment solutions team were outperforming other comparative services. Examples were given of how the team approached its work, providing holistic support to address often complex needs. It was felt that the target of supporting 300 people who were furthest away from employment would make a significant impact. The service complemented the mainstream offer provided by DWP and Job Centre Plus. It was suggested that OSMB visited the Employment Solution team at a future point.

Clarification was sought on how the 'hardest to reach' were identified and engaged with and what mitigation was in place to reduce the risk of people 'falling through the gap'. It was outlined that there were good levels of coordination between statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sectors. For example, outreach workers embedded in communities to liaise with groups to identify people with whom agencies already had a trusted relationship. There were links with other projects such as debt advice, early help, or programmes providing support for people with more complex needs for example drug and alcohol issues.

Further details were sought about multisport physical activity hubs and where these would be located. It was outlined that the capital funding would lever in additional grants from the football Association to create two new facilities in the borough. The locations of these had not yet been determined. Assurance was given that further discussions will take place to identify the areas that meet the criteria and match existing priorities.

In respect of the funding relating to the Children's Capital of Culture,

clarification was sought whether the creation of 40 paid traineeships for young people aged 16 to 25 was sufficiently ambitious. It was clarified that the purpose of this element was to build capacity within host organisations to build a legacy of skills and knowledge within the cultural partnerships. It was observed that there were opportunities to target skills training across the labour market and particularly focusing on young people.

In respect of the capital spend linked to the visitor and leisure economy, clarification was sought to establish how the projects had been selected. It was outlined that the projects had received funding from the 'Levelling-Up' programme. Since that point there had been inflationary pressures which had had an impact on their delivery. In order to deliver the agreed scope, the proposal was to pick up the shortfall through this capital funding so that existing projects could deliver their output and outcomes. It was reiterated that the selected programmes aligned with the set criteria for use of funding and had been prioritised on that basis. Significant investment in Rotherham's towns and villages had been levered in over recent years, amounting to some £1 million.

Further details were sought about the equality impact assessment and gathering data related to take-up of employment and skill support for people with protected characteristics. It was outlined that there was a difficulty in gathering information, particularly with wider networks, however work was underway to identify who access services and the barriers they may face.

#### **Resolved:**

- 1) That a further progress report be submitted to the Board prior to the end of the current municipal year.
- 2) That a visit to the Employment Solutions team be organised for OSMB members.
- 3) That Cabinet be advised that the following recommendations be supported:

That Cabinet:

1. Endorse the projects for submission to South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority for award of UKSPF for 2023/24 and 2024/25 as follows:
  - a) Local Business Support
    - i) £1,693,727 for sub-regional business support supporting three strands of "Launchpad" (start-up support); productivity and low carbon.
    - ii) £234,870 capital for Rotherham's business incubation centres.
    - iii) £234,482 for social value to coordinate and enhance



social value activity, focused on increasing local spend through anchor organisations' procurement activity.

- b) People and Skills
    - i) £1,291,013 for Rotherham integrated skills programme (RISP) providing four projects covering the journey from initial engagement with those hardest to reach, through to sustainable employment and career progression.
    - ii) £421,502 for Children's Capital of Culture to extend and expand the traineeship programme with further capacity building support for partners.
  - c) Communities and Place
    - i) £471,664 for Children's Capital of Culture, including investment in existing and new events and festivals across the Borough, building capacity in community organisations and groups and creating more resilient models for grass roots programmes.
    - ii) £370,094 for Open Arms Rotherham phase 2 for ongoing delivery of fortnightly one-stop shop sessions, in targeted neighbourhoods and further development of community infrastructure, including community leaders.
    - iii) £100,000 for Reaching Out Across Communities, establishing local equality networks to ensure that current and future interventions are informed by and effectively reach all of Rotherham's diverse communities.
    - iv) £280,000 for town centre events to deliver a regular programme and increase footfall.
    - v) £1,068,709 for the visitor and leisure economy, supporting the delivery of capital schemes across Rotherham, focused on major attractions, increasing visitor numbers, and improving skills
    - vi) £80,000 capital for Active Lives, creating additional multi-sport play zones in local communities.
  - d) Rural
    - i) £200,000 for a small grants programme for rural businesses supporting rural micro and small enterprises and tourism and the visitor economy.
2. Agrees to delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to determine revised and final allocations for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, including allocation of funding to the three capital schemes within the 'visitor and leisure economy' proposal. This is to include provision for other eligible actions within the use of the fund should it not be

possible to achieve full spend of the grant through the allocations above.

### **31. ROTHERHAM MARKETS & LIBRARY REDEVELOPMENT**

The Chair invited the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment to introduce the report. Referring to the scrutiny review undertaken by Improving Places Select Commission, he outlined the importance of the market to Rotherham as a historic market town. The markets supported 300 local businesses, as well as a programme of events, street markets and themed markets.

The market redevelopment was part of the Town Centre Masterplan agreed in 2017. The proposed relocation of the library emerged from the work undertaken for the new Library Strategy (2021-2026) and following consultation and engagement, it was identified that a more central location for the library was the preferred option. The report proposed enabling works in order that preparation could begin on site and mitigate against increasing costs. It was expected that the full scheme would be presented to Cabinet in November 2023.

The Chair invited the Chair of Improving Places Select Commission to speak to the report. It was acknowledged that market redevelopment may be challenging for traders, customers and the local authority. He thanked the Strategic Director for referencing the recommendations from the commission's scrutiny review. He highlighted that it was critical that the food and beverage offer was developed; recognising that redevelopments worked better where the facilities were multiuse, including health and well-being and cultural events. The relocation of the library was felt to be key to this. It was also observed that the nearby student population was an opportunity to increase potential footfall.

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

Further details were sought on opportunities to host alternative events such as artisan markets. In response, it was outlined that such examples would be part of the offer alongside supporting the existing business base. The proposals focused on the refurbishment and redevelopment of the current market site.

It was noted that since the introduction of the Thursday market, town centre shops had experienced greater footfall because of the trade that had been brought in. Further details were sought about the engagement with local traders and their views of the redevelopment/refurbishment plans. It was noted that financial support would be offered during the period of refurbishment to compensate for disruption and upheaval. It was outlined that traders had engaged with the design and concept work, with plans amended following feedback, including the introduction of a temporary market solution.

Further details were sought about the potential for social or evening events in the covered market. An example was given of evening events related to celebrations such as Ramadan and Eid which attracted communities that may not usually access the town centre. It was confirmed that the cultural events offer would be linked to the development to ensure that the flexible space could be used for different events and groups.

It was noted that a number of other towns and cities had recently refurbished their market complexes. Clarification was sought that local authorities had been contacted to establish if lessons could be learnt from their experiences. It was confirmed that this had been the case, in addition the Market Manager had contacted their equivalent in other local authorities and used feedback from their traders on the impact of redevelopment.

Further details were requested on how engagement had been conducted and examples were given of engagement with traders and the public. It was noted that the Market Manager would undertake 'soft consultation' through conversations with market traders. In terms of the library proposals, there have been extensive public engagement. An example was given of recent public consultation on the library offer and the outdoor space.

Further details were sought to clarify delegated authority. It was outlined that once approval for the enabling work had been given by Cabinet, the Strategic Director in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Cabinet Member, could make decisions to ensure that the enabling work progressed.

As Members indicated that they wish to ask questions of Exempt Appendix 2, as resolved in minute 17, the meeting went into closed session.

A discussion on the following issues ensued:

- Commercial sensitivities and confidentiality;
- Inflationary pressures;
- Risks and mitigations.

The Chair re-opened the session.

**Resolved:**

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

That Cabinet:

1. Note the progress to date on Rotherham Markets and Library redevelopment.
2. Approve the enabling works for the Rotherham Markets and Library development, as detailed in Appendix 2 of this report.
3. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Regeneration of Environment, in consultation with the S151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Jobs and Local Economy, to award contract(s) for the works up to the values detailed in Appendix 2.

## **32. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered its Work Programme.

The Senior Governance Adviser outlined future work including the review of life-saving equipment and Children's Commissioner Takeover Challenge.

There was a request for a presentation on the outcomes of the 2021 Census. It was also noted that a separate meeting would be organised to discuss the Director of Public Health's Annual Report: The Impact of the Pandemic in Rotherham.

An update was requested on educational attainment and SEND. It was confirmed that this would come under the remit of Improving Lives Select Commission.

The Chair of the Health Select Committee requested that every effort be made, wherever possible, to secure attendance from relevant Cabinet Members and senior officers at future meetings.

**Resolved:** - That the Work Programme be approved.

## **33. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS**

There were no updates given.

## **34. CALL-IN ISSUES**

There were no call-in issues.

## **35. URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items.

## **36. 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 13 September 2023 at Rotherham Town Hall.

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Public Report  
Cabinet

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**  
Cabinet – 18 September 2023

**Report Title**  
LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**  
Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**  
Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

**Report Author(s)**  
Simon Dennis, Corporate Improvement and Risk Manager  
[simon.dennis@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:simon.dennis@rotherham.gov.uk)

Tanya Lound, Corporate Improvement and Risk Officer  
[tanya.lound@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:tanya.lound@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**  
Borough-Wide

### **Report Summary**

All Councils are encouraged to receive a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) once every five years. The CPC is carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) using a process, which is designed to provide robust, strategic and credible challenge and support and avoid insularity.

The LGA CPC took place between 5 – 8 June 2023 and the findings were received in August 2023 (see Appendix 1). The report concludes that: *“Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council serves the town well and is today an impressive organisation.”*

In response to the findings and the seven recommendations in the report, the Council has produced a high-level Action Plan (see Appendix 2) for approval by Cabinet.

## **Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Note the observations and key recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Team to the Council.
2. Approve the high-level action plan which is the Council's response to the findings.

## **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (RMBC) Feedback Report  
Appendix 2 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (RMBC) Action Plan  
Appendix 3 Equality Screening Assessment  
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

[Corporate Peer Challenge Website - Local Government Association](#)

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**  
None

**Council Approval Required**  
No

**Exempt from the Press and Public**  
No



## **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 All Councils are encouraged to receive a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) once every five years. This is delivered at no cost to the Council. The CPC is carried out by the Local Governance Association (LGA) using a process which is designed to provide robust, strategic and credible challenge and support and avoid insularity.
- 1.2 CPCs are focused on ensuring that Councils have the capacity, governance, leadership, and finance to deliver their ambition. The process is not an inspection and is designed to be forward-looking to help accelerate and drive improvement.
- 1.3 Rotherham Council's CPC took place between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and the findings were received in August 2023. The full report is attached at Appendix 1. In response to the findings the Council has produced a high-level Action Plan for approval by Cabinet and this is attached at Appendix 2.

### **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 During the Council's CPC, the peer team considered the following five themes, which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges:
  1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the Council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the Council delivering effectively on its priorities?
  2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the Council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
  3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
  4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the Council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the Council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
  5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the Council have the capacity to improve?
- 2.2 In addition to these five areas, the Council asked the peer team to provide observations and feedback on the Council's progress in the last five years and the work being undertaken to create an inclusive economy.
- 2.3 The CPC was delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers and these peers were selected based on their relevant expertise. The peers involved in the Council's CPC were:

- **Denise Park** (Chief Executive – Blackburn with Darwen Council)
- **Councillor Cllr Eamonn O'Brien** (Leader – Bury Council)
- **Dame Mary Ney** (LGA Associate and former Government Commissioner at Rotherham MBC)
- **Stephan Van Arendsen** (Executive Director for Corporate Resources and Customer Services – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council)
- **Richard Roe** (Corporate Director for Place – Trafford Council)
- **Satvinder Rana** (Senior Regional Adviser – LGA)

2.4 The peer team prepared by reviewing evidence submitted by the Council and then spent three days onsite at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023. During this time the team:

- Gathered information and views from over 40 meetings, in addition to further research and reading of over 70 pieces of evidence.
- Spoke to over 100 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.
- Went on a tour of the Town Centre and part of the wider borough.

2.5 The 'LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (RMBC) Feedback Report' received in August 2023 provides a summary of the peer team's findings (see Appendix 1). Positively, the report concludes that:

*"Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council serves the town well and is today an impressive organisation. Being named the 'Most Improved Council' in the country at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Award in 2022 provides ample evidence that it is now in a very good place. It is ambitious and has well-established and robust foundations, along with several notable and commendable practices that other councils can learn from."*

2.6 To report includes seven recommendations to support the Council's continuous improvement journey, which are:

- **Recommendation 1** *Celebrate the council's achievements!*
- **Recommendation 2** *Develop an externally facing compelling and positive narrative of place which will help to promote and market the borough and capitalise on Rotherham's assets.*
- **Recommendation 3** *Use the significant investments underway to expand and attract private sector investment at scale, maximising its potential and supporting a more inclusive economic future.*
- **Recommendation 4** *Develop effective pathways and mechanisms for local people, especially young people, to benefit from inclusive growth that can help to deliver improved health outcomes and address inequalities.*

- **Recommendation 5** *Review performance management with a focus on demonstrating impact and an improvement in outcomes in delivering the council's ambition; and use the strong leadership, capacity and capability of the top-team to drive and deliver further organisational transformations and change across the borough at pace.*
- **Recommendation 6** *Building on the Neighbourhood working model, develop a clearer and shared understanding of integrated locality working across the public sector and increase the pace of digital transformation across the organisation to deliver improved outcomes for residents and consistently improve the customer experience.*
- **Recommendation 7** *Continue to keep the medium-term financial strategy under review – testing assumptions and undertaking sensitivity analysis – and continue to report to Members on a regular basis.*

2.7 A high-level action plan has been developed in response to the findings and is attached (see Appendix 2) for Cabinet's approval. The action plan includes 20 actions in total. Once approved, the action plan is to be published on both the Council's and the LGA's website.

2.8 The Chief Executive will oversee the action plan and the development of anymore detailed action plan documents.

2.9 The LGA have advised that a progress meeting is to take place in 2024 to review the progress being made against the recommendations of the CPC. This meeting will take note of any changes in the context the Council is working in and will also capture any case studies about the impact of the CPC. A progress report will be published 12 months after the CPC.

2.10 The Council's next Corporate Peer Challenge should take place in 2028.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 The LGA provides guidance and templates for local authorities participating in a Corporate Peer Challenge to ensure that there is a consistent approach and these templates have been used to develop the action plan attached at Appendix 2.

3.2 Cabinet is asked to consider and agree the high-level action plan which is the Council's response to the findings.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 The feedback report and draft action plan has been developed in consultation with the Strategic Leadership Team and relevant Assistant Directors.

Additional consultation will also be undertaken as part of the development of the more detailed action plan by November 2023.

**5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The feedback report and action plan will be published on the Council's and LGA's website after approval by Cabinet.
- 5.2 Next steps are outlined in paragraphs 2.8 - 2.10, above.

**6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Action Plan will be delivered within the resources approved as part of the Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 6.2 Recommendation 7 relates to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which will continue to be reviewed and reported to Members.
- 6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

**7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

**8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report.

**9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 There are no direct implications for children and young people arising from this report.

**10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 The actions contained within the Action Plan are aimed at achieving the best possible outcomes for local people and residents, as well as addressing inequalities.

**11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 There are no direct implications relating to CO2 emissions and climate change arising from this report.

**12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1. Partners played a key role in the Corporate Peer Challenge process and working with partners across the public, private and voluntary and community sectors will be integral to the delivery of the Action Plan.

- 12.2 Following publication and consideration at Cabinet, the findings will be shared with partners via the Rotherham Together Partnership.

### 13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The LGA CPC process results in a public report which requires a formal response from the Council in the form of an action plan. The principal risk is that the Council fails to fully implement the action plan and, as a result, fails to improve.
- 13.2 To address this risk, the actions included in the action plan will be monitored quarterly using the process already in place for all external inspections and reviews. This will also be reported to the Audit Committee every six months in line with our current process.

### 14. Accountable Officer

Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	04/09/23
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	30/08/23
Head of Legal Services (Deputy Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	30/08/23

Report Author: Simon Dennis, Corporate Improvement and Risk Manager  
simon.dennis@rotherham.gov.uk

Tanya Lound, Corporate Improvement and Risk Officer  
tanya.lound@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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# LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Feedback report



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## 1. Executive summary

Rotherham is a historic minster and market town in south Yorkshire with a rich history, impressive cultural and architectural heritage, an attractive geography, and active communities. It has made, and continues to make, a valuable contribution to the region.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council serves the town well and is today an impressive organisation. Being named the 'Most Improved Council' in the country at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Award in 2022 provides ample evidence that it is now in a very good place. It is ambitious and has well-established and robust foundations, along with several notable and commendable practices that other councils can learn from.

There is a good collective understanding of place, accompanied by a clear vision and ambitious goals. These are widely acknowledged and supported by everybody from Members and staff to partners and other stakeholders. People speak highly about the vision and aspirations of the council and are committed to delivering it.

There is strong and visible political and managerial leadership in the council at borough and sub regional level. The Leader and the Chief Executive have demonstrated drive in bringing about the necessary change across the council to get it to the position it is now at. More widely there are excellent and effective Member and officer relationships built on mutual trust at a variety of levels. Members spoke highly of the support they receive from officers and were complementary of the systems put in place for them to receive the necessary information and timely responses to their ward-related enquiries.

The peer team met some really good quality staff from across the council. They were motivated, dedicated and determined to deliver the best outcomes for residents. They knew the priorities of the council and wanted to do their best to deliver against them. There is also good evidence of effective governance and a positive and healthy organisational culture that supports the council in delivering some good quality services. These attributes should now be used to achieve outcomes, demonstrate impact and facilitate further organisational transformation to help continue improving the customer experience.

It was pleasing to learn that the council's children's services have been judged as

‘good’ twice in a row by OFSTED. The council is now aiming for an ‘outstanding’ rating in future OFSTED assessments and has a clear ambition, plan and staff motivation to achieve that. This is testament to the progress the council has made over the last five years.

The council has forged robust partnerships and cultivated good working relationships that have stood the test of time. These can now be further developed to deliver integrated public services at the local level, with the goal of enhancing health outcomes and addressing inequalities.

There is strong stewardship of financial resources in the council and a clear understanding of the financial challenges and landscape that reflects and supports council priorities. This has led to a stable financial position which is supported by a sustainable financial strategy. Going forward the council will need to keep its capital programme, borrowing levels and the level of reserves under constant review to mitigate against volatility in the economy.

The council has been successful in attracting significant public sector investment and has an extensive (£610m) capital programme to deliver over the next three years. This will help the council to address the challenge in attracting private sector investment at scale to support the need and desire for an inclusive, sustainable and more diverse economy that is not overly reliant on the public sector.

The time is right for Rotherham Council to build on this success with heightened confidence and unleash the full potential of the place. There is a positive story to be told about the place, and the council together with its key stakeholders should start the process of building a compelling outward focused narrative that can market and promote Rotherham to the outside world.

## 2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team’s key recommendations to the council:

### 2.1 Recommendation 1

*Celebrate the council’s achievements!*

There is a lot to be proud of in Rotherham. The council has undergone an impressive transformation and has many exemplary and commendable practices that other councils can learn from. These, as well as the external validations the council has received, should be more actively profiled and celebrated widely.

## **2.2 Recommendation 2**

*Develop an externally facing compelling and positive narrative of place which will help to promote and market the borough and capitalise on Rotherham's assets.*

A strong, consistent and compelling outward focusing story about Rotherham told over and over again will help to market the borough, promote the place and its assets and inject confidence to attract inward investment as well as change perceptions of the town as a great place to live, work and visit.

## **2.3 Recommendation 3**

*Use the significant investments underway to expand and attract private sector investment at scale, maximising its potential and supporting a more inclusive economic future.*

By diversifying investment sources, the council can not only mitigate the risk of a decline in activity if public funds were to diminish but also foster the growth of a more inclusive and mixed economy, thereby ensuring long-term sustainability for the borough.

## **2.4 Recommendation 4**

*Develop effective pathways and mechanisms for local people, especially young people, to benefit from inclusive growth that can help to deliver improved health outcomes and address inequalities.*

Facilitating local people to connect into growth opportunities through clear pathways to new skills, jobs and business opportunities will ensure that economic growth is inclusive and brings tangible social value.

## **2.5 Recommendation 5**

*Review performance management with a focus on demonstrating impact and an improvement in outcomes in delivering the council's ambition; and use the strong*

*leadership, capacity and capability of the top-team to drive and deliver further organisational transformations and change across the borough at pace.*

Streamline performance management and continue to work with scrutiny to ensure that the process of taking items to scrutiny before they reach Cabinet does not slow down decision-making. Furthermore, maximising the potential of the top-team to take on greater levels of corporate responsibility can drive and deliver future change and transformations at pace, whilst maintaining the strong foundations and good governance that has been put in place.

## **2.6 Recommendation 6**

*Building on the Neighbourhood working model, develop a clearer and shared understanding of integrated locality working across the public sector and increase the pace of digital transformation across the organisation to deliver improved outcomes for residents and consistently improve the customer experience.*

This will help to further modernise the organisation and improve efficiency and effectiveness. Digital transformation should lead to the discontinuing of parallel paper-based processes to avoid duplication, increase efficiency and improve the customer experience. Integrated locality working through increased co-design and co-production of solutions and services alongside partner organisations can deliver enhanced outcomes for residents through improved services and solutions which are tailored to their needs.

## **2.7 Recommendation 7**

*Continue to keep the medium-term financial strategy under review - testing assumptions and undertaking sensitivity analysis – and continue to report to Members on a regular basis.*

Using scenario planning and reviewing the medium-term financial strategy helps to identify options when there are uncertainties over future funding arrangements and volatility in the economy. This will enable the council to stress test demand-led budgets and assess risks to fully understand and reflect the impact of variables going forward. Continuing to keep Members updated on the fiscal health of the organisation and associated risks will ensure they maintain a strong grip on the budget.

### 3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

#### 3.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected Member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- **Denise Park** (Chief Executive - Blackburn with Darwen Council)
- **Councillor Cllr Eamonn O'Brien** (Leader - Bury Council)
- **Dame Mary Ney** (LGA Associate and former Government Commissioner at Rotherham MBC)
- **Stephan Van Arendsen** (Executive Director for Corporate Resources and Customer Services - Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council)
- **Richard Roe** (Corporate Director for Place - Trafford Council)
- **Satvinder Rana** (Senior Regional Adviser - LGA)

#### 3.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of

local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

In addition to these questions, the council asked the peer team to provide observations and feedback on the council's progress in the last five years and the work being undertaken to create an inclusive economy.

### **3.3 The peer challenge process**

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent three days *onsite* at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, during which they:

- Gathered information and views from over 40 meetings, in addition to further research and reading of over 70 pieces of evidence.
- Spoke to over 100 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.
- Went on a tour of the Town Centre and part of the wider borough.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and Members.

## **4. Feedback**

### **4.1 Local priorities and outcomes**

The council has clearly defined ambitions, priorities, and a strategic context around people, economy, environment and neighbourhoods. These are consistently articulated in high-quality corporate documents such as the Rotherham Plan 2025, the Council Plan 2022-25, the Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2023-24, and the Performance Management Framework 2022-25. These strategic documents are

further supported by service plans, team plans, ward plans, and other operational strategies and plans, demonstrating a strong alignment between strategic goals, corporate priorities and delivery mechanisms.

There is a clear sense of place and a good understanding of ambitions, and priorities among Members, staff and partners who are all supportive of what the council is trying to achieve. Everybody the peer team met was well-informed about the council's objectives and showed eagerness to contribute their part in achieving them – *“it’s an ambitious council at all levels”*.

The current performance and risk management practices are robust, but they primarily focus on activities and key performance indicators (KPIs) rather than demonstrating impact and tangible improvements in outcomes. In the next phase of developing the council plan and supporting performance management framework, it will be important to establish a stronger connection that illustrates how these activities and KPIs are directly contributing to better outcomes for individuals, the community and the place. This may involve reinforcing the alignment of outcome targets and performance measures with the council's ambitions to demonstrate how the vision, priorities, and projects translate into meaningful results that enhance the quality of life for residents.

The council has successfully stabilised its organisational position by focusing on improving its people services, which has put it in a very good position. It is now placing greater importance on its role in shaping the town and surrounding towns and villages and has ambitious regeneration plans that are making progress. It is demonstrating aspirations for the borough and providing effective leadership within the community. Its commitment to creating an inclusive economy is evident. Investments are being made in Forge Island, housing developments in the town centre, and enhancing public spaces to boost civic pride and increase footfall.

The council now needs to utilise these investments as leverage for attracting private investment, thus creating a more economically sustainable and diversified economy with high-quality employment opportunities and ensuring that all residents can benefit from these prospects. Achieving outcomes, making impact and demonstrating social value is paramount.



## 4.2 Organisational and place leadership

The council demonstrates effective local leadership both at the borough and sub-regional levels. It effectively fulfils its role as a system leader through strong, visible, and highly respected political and managerial leadership. People speak highly of the Leader and the Chief Executive, commending their dedication and determination in bringing about the required transformations within the council - *“they have set the right tone and culture”*. They are supported by a capable and effective top-team made up of Cabinet Members and the strategic leadership team who all offer scope for greater levels of corporate responsibility to drive future change and transformations at pace.

The council has well-established and successful working relationships with public sector partners, as well as with voluntary and community sector and faith partners. These relationships are fostered through both informal and formal structures, ensuring effective collaboration. However, there is an opportunity to expand and strengthen relationships with a broader range of local private sector partners. By engaging these partners, the council can benefit from their expertise and resources to further support the delivery of its ambitions and priorities.

The council’s Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy aspires to strengthen the role of Ward Members as community leaders who can work with their communities, their partners and those delivering service in communities to bring about the changes that communities want to see. The peer team was impressed by the exemplary approach to community engagement at ward level, where dedicated and well-supported Ward Members take the lead.

However, presently most of the neighbourhood working occurs at ward level with the involvement of council staff and there is an opportunity to expand upon this approach by promoting integrated locality working through increased co-design and co-production of solutions and services with partner organisations. This collaborative effort has the potential to deliver enhanced outcomes for residents, ensuring improved services and solutions tailored to their needs.

The council delivers a good standard of core services, and it was pleasing to learn that the council’s children’s services have been judged as ‘good’ twice in a row by OFSTED. The council is now aiming for an ‘outstanding’ rating in future OFSTED



assessments and has a clear ambition, plan and staff motivation to achieve that.

Rotherham has positive attributes such as its location at the heart of a regional economy, excellent rail and motorway connectivity, its industrial past and post-industrial heritage, coupled with the presence of green spaces - all contributing to its unique character. The town also boasts stable and well-established communities, as well as a promising potential for developing and expanding the skills base. These attributes need to be used to market and promote the economic potential of the borough widely.

The peer team heard that the council has done a lot in building and bringing about internal pride among council staff, Members and residents. The time is now right to put similar type of effort into developing an externally facing narrative of place which will help to attract inward investment, market the borough, and promote the place.

This can be done by leveraging the knowledge and understanding of the town held by Members, staff and partners - especially private sector partners. It is possible to shape this narrative into a powerful pitch that can resonate not only within Rotherham but also in the wider world. This should be done through improved and continuing external communication, focusing on the future and Rotherham's place in it.

### **4.3 Governance and culture**

There are clear, robust and embedded governance arrangements, accompanied by effective overview and scrutiny mechanisms. People are clear about the governance arrangements, and both the scrutiny arrangements and the Audit Committee work well and are in line with what is expected. The peer team received positive feedback on the work carried out by scrutiny through scrutiny reviews, the support Members receive from officers, and the influence scrutiny has on the council's decision-making process, particularly through pre-decision scrutiny – *“there is transparency in decision-making”*.

There is an opportunity now to review performance management and decision-making processes to ensure they continue to be proportionate and support the required pace in the council to deliver its place shaping ambition. The council should keep the process of taking items to scrutiny before it reaches Cabinet under review to

ensure that it does not slow down decision-making.

Cabinet Members and the strategic leadership team are visible and accessible, fostering effective collaboration and a strong sense of team spirit. The strategic leadership team works well together, displaying a cohesive and cooperative approach. Moreover, there are exemplary and highly effective relationships between Members and officers, built on mutual trust and respect. Members from all political groups expressed appreciation for the support they receive from officers, as well as the well-supported systems in place to provide them with the necessary information and efficiently respond to their ward-related enquiries.

The council has developed a positive organisational culture, underpinned by clear values that are widely understood and embraced by the staff – *“the ‘people and culture’ are the key success factors in Rotherham”*. Internal communication and engagement through staff networks are both effective and highly valued by employees. The staff groups that the peer team met came across as motivated, dedicated and determined to deliver the best outcomes for residents. They knew the area and the priorities of the council well and wanted to do their best to deliver against them. They feel empowered and viewed the council as a great place to work. Relationships with trade unions are *“the best they’ve ever been”*, further contributing to a harmonious and cooperative working environment. These should now be used to facilitate further organisational transformation to help continue improving the customer experience.

The council has a well-developed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which focuses on communication and engagement; delivering accessible and responsive services; providing leadership and organisation commitment; and ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce. It is also developing a route map to reach ‘excellent’ under the Local Government Equality Framework.

Women make up a high percentage of the council’s workforce (albeit with many working in part-time roles) and it has an under-representation of people under 25 and an under-representation of people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities when compared to the profile of the local population. However, it was good to see that staff training, development and support networks are all in place to assist with career development and to foster an inclusive and supportive

organisational culture.

The council has good relationships with faith organisations and is developing its approach to equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement to strengthen conversations with local communities. It continues to support several community events celebrating and championing equality, diversity, and inclusion, including Holocaust Memorial Day, International Women's Day, Black History Month, Interfaith Week, The Rotherham Show and Disability Awareness Month to name a few.

The council should build on these foundations to ensure that all groups benefit from not just investments in services but also the economy and access to education, training and good quality jobs across the board.

#### **4.4 Financial planning and management**

Strategic financial planning in the council is robust, with strong alignment to the corporate plan. The proposal for the 2023/24 budget shows a balanced position, and multi-year savings plans have been developed. The council's transformation plans are backed up by a flexible use of capital receipts strategy.

The capital programme is ambitious and has a recent history of under delivery and slippage. Cost and market pressures have also been an issue and borrowing is set to increase as a proportion of funding - the 2023/24 delivery target is high.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy has been developed to bolster reserves, but they are still low in comparison to peer councils. The latest Audit opinion on the accounts is unqualified, although there were significant weaknesses in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) identified in the Value For Money (VFM) opinion. The council is participating in the Safety Valve Programme to further develop SEND provision and positive recognition has been received from the Department for Education (DfE) in relation to the progress made to date.

Generally, the peer team found there to be strong stewardship of financial resources in the council and a clear understanding of the financial challenges and landscape that reflects and supports council priorities. The council has done a lot of work in the last few years to get to a position where it is now in a sustainable financial position. This position is supported by the external auditor.

The 'golden triangle' between the section 151 officer, the head of paid service and

the monitoring officer is strong and works well. The section 151 officer and deputy are respected professionals providing strong financial leadership. They have built a robust and effective finance function with good relationships across council departments.

The 2022/23 fiscal year required proactive financial management to reduce the £18m forecasted overspend. This was reduced to £8.4m by December 2022, helped in part by £4.9m short term in-year savings. It should be noted that children's services has overspent year on year and this should be managed. To reflect continuing pressure in demand led budgets, the council should ensure increased rigour in the budget planning process around assumptions and continuously stress test these demand-led budgets.

With the huge (£610m) capital programme in place, it is essential to continue to formally review capital investment plans to ensure they remain robust and appropriate with updated sensitivity and risk analysis undertaken. Any sensitivities and risks identified should then link into the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy as well as its reserves. This means keeping the required level of reserves under review and regularly taking the risk register to Cabinet as part of the risk management process and to ensure Members maintain a grip on the levels of borrowing. This is particularly important considering the overspend in 2022/23 and volatility in the economy that may impact on the council's capital programme.

The economy is very volatile and can have a huge impact on the council's ability to deliver its ambitious capital programme. This calls for the council to develop a robust plan to monitor market trends and market performance of assets which are required to deliver an income stream to finance borrowing, as part of the annual budget setting process.

#### **4.5 Capacity for improvement**

There is a high level of self-awareness within the council among both Members and officers and they use 2016 as a reference point to measure progress – *“we are now able to have challenging conversations across the council”*. The council engaged well with Commissioners and used the intervention period to accelerate improvements. Since then, the council has welcomed external challenge, has supported formal inspections, and has opened itself to a range of peer reviews to support a learning

culture. It was named the 'Most Improved Council' in the country at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Award in 2022.

The council is in a good position to support the delivery of its priorities and has the capacity, ambition and capability to bring about further transformation in its services to improve the customer experience – *“we want to be the best there is”*. People have acknowledged the council's leadership role in safeguarding residents during the pandemic, its handling of migration issues, and its current efforts to support those in need to deal with the cost-of-living crisis.

Going forward, the council needs to continue reviewing its required skills and capacity to deliver its significant capital programme and ambitions for an inclusive economy. It should think about ways to increase flexibility in skills and capacity. This might involve collaborating more closely with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and the private sector to make sure that the required skills and capacity are accessible whenever they are needed, particularly when the council is unable to hire those specialised skills directly.

Like many other local authorities, recruitment in some key areas is an issue that will require proactively marketing and highlighting the benefits of working in Rotherham and continuing to review the overall pay and reward package through the delivery and progression of the Workforce Plan. Promoting how Rotherham is a fantastic place to work, has brilliant staff and a favourable organisational culture can help to address some of these recruitment issues.

There is scope to enhance digitisation and service transformation consistently across the council and in collaboration with partners to improve the customer experience. This opportunity should be seized to modernise services and improve efficiency and effectiveness, including by tackling parallel paper-based processes that are still in existence within the organisation.

### ***Additional areas of specific focus***

Nine years ago, the council faced significant challenges and experienced serious failures in its governance and service. However, it has undergone an impressive transformation and is now a vibrant, ambitious and proactive organisation with high aspirations for the future. It was inspiring to see a complete transformation in the

atmosphere, culture, and relationships, as these lie at the core of all the changes and improvements that have taken place. The council has undertaken an extensive amount of work to shift people's mindsets resulting in the council's current strong position - effort which not everyone beyond Rotherham can see.

It is time for Rotherham to shift its focus towards the future with confidence. The prospects ahead are promising, and it is the council's responsibility to determine how bright it wants to make them. Despite the current unsettled and uncertain external economic climate, Rotherham possesses positive qualities that can support its advancement and enable it to seize opportunities. There is evidence suggesting that the council has already started embracing a more outward-looking perspective and is making progress. Now, it must continue to progress rapidly and confidently.

To a large extent it has already started the process of doing this and is placing greater importance on place shaping and delivering joined up services at the neighbourhood level. It is demonstrating aspirations for the borough and providing effective leadership within the community. For example, Rotherham has seen the establishment of a university centre, a major theme park, and various other projects in the town centre and local high streets.

Furthermore, construction has also commenced on improving the railway station and the Forge Island leisure development, which will introduce a new cinema, hotel, and five restaurants, attracting visitors to the town centre and utilising the recreational potential of the river. Moreover, valuable investments of £40m have been secured through the Levelling Up Fund by the council. This is being used to boost the development of the borough's leisure and tourist economy and skills with grants provided to Wentworth Woodhouse, Gulliver's, Maltby Academy, and Magna as well as facilitating the redevelopment of its own country parks at Rother Valley and Thrybergh. £20m of this grant will be used to further the regeneration of the town centre boosted with an additional £31.6m from the Towns Fund to carry out ambitious regeneration projects across the town centre, Eastwood and Templeborough. These are all very positive and exciting developments, and the peer team encourages the council and its partners to demonstrate greater confidence in pursuing further opportunities and maximising the full potential of the whole area.

The council is on track in achieving its new council housing targets and there is some

private sector development but a greater focus on developing a broader range of housing tenures across the borough to meet future housing needs of the local population would support the council's ambition of a higher waged mixed economy and help to spread economic benefits. There are also opportunities to grow and develop a coordinated visitor economy, capitalising on Rotherham's heritage, natural assets and the new regeneration schemes.

The council has achieved success in attracting significant public sector investment which means the current regeneration underway in Rotherham is primarily funded by the public sector. It is important that this investment is used as a leverage for attracting additional private sector investment, fostering the growth of a mixed economy and ensuring long-term economic sustainability for the borough.

Furthermore, by diversifying its investment sources, the council can mitigate the risk of a decline in activity if public funds were to diminish. To help do this, the council should utilise the investment of public funds to establish market conditions to create an environment that is attractive to the private sector, encouraging them to invest in Rotherham. This approach will provide a consistent stream of investment, even if public funds become limited in the future.

Therefore, there is work to be done to achieve a truly mixed and an inclusive economy that makes a strong and visible connection between the regeneration of the 'place' to meet the needs of the 'people'. The council can create greater social value and demonstrate the tangible impact it is making on addressing, for example, health inequalities and improving the quality of life of residents. Investments in skills development, employment support, local and sustainable procurement, focused planning policies, etc should complement the investment and opportunities being created through the physical regeneration.

Enabling local people to connect into those opportunities through clear pathways to new skills, jobs and business opportunities will ensure local jobs and business opportunities are more likely to be accessible to local people.



## 5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The CPC process includes a six-month check-in session, which provides space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and discuss next steps.

In the meantime, Satvinder Rana, Senior Regional Adviser is the main contact between Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Local Government Association. Satvinder is available to discuss any further support the council requires. His contact details are Email: [satvinder.rana@local.gov.uk](mailto:satvinder.rana@local.gov.uk) Tel: 07887 997 124.



**Satvinder Rana**  
Senior Regional Adviser, LGA  
(On behalf of the peer challenge team)



## Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

### September 2023

<b>Recommendation 1: Celebrate the council's achievements!</b>	
<b>What the peers said:</b> There is a lot to be proud of in Rotherham. The council has undergone an impressive transformation and has many exemplary and commendable practices that other councils can learn from. These, as well as the external validations the council has received, should be more actively profiled and celebrated widely.	
<b>Actions we plan to take</b>	<b>Timescales for delivery</b>
Build on our current communications approach, ensuring that we celebrate achievements and good news stories and actively promote successful delivery of the Council Plan and Year Ahead Delivery Plan commitments.	March 2024
Engage with our workforce to obtain their ideas for capturing our successes and sharing them. To kickstart this, we will hold a celebration event with the workforce and a focused Wider Leadership Team session to share the peer challenge feedback, celebrate the achievements and say thank you.	March 2024
<b>Recommendation 2: Develop an externally facing compelling and positive narrative of place which will help to promote and market the borough and capitalise on Rotherham's assets.</b>	
<b>What the peers said:</b> A strong, consistent and compelling outward focusing story about Rotherham told over and over again will help to market the borough, promote the place and its assets and inject confidence to attract inward investment as well as change perceptions of the town as a great place to live, work and visit.	
<b>Actions we plan to take</b>	<b>Timescales for delivery</b>
Hold an event to bring stakeholders together, to capture people's views to help update the Rotherham Story and have a positive place narrative for the borough.	November 2023
Develop an Inward Investment Plan to attract private sector investment in the borough.	March 2024
Alongside our partners, develop a plan to promote the success and achievement of key milestones in the Rotherham Plan.	March 2024

Work with colleagues to develop the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for South Yorkshire to strengthen Rotherham's position and promote a coherent place narrative. We will also partner with the LVEP and emergent wider Yorkshire Destination Development Partnership to secure external funding.	March 2025
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**Recommendation 3: Use the significant investments underway to expand and attract private sector investment at scale, maximising its potential and supporting a more inclusive economic future.**

**What the peers said:** By diversifying investment sources, the council can not only mitigate the risk of a decline in activity if public funds were to diminish but also foster the growth of a more inclusive and mixed economy, thereby ensuring long-term sustainability for the borough.

Actions we plan to take	Timescales for delivery
Continue to focus on delivery of projects currently in the Place Based Investment Strategy to build investor confidence and create opportunities for private investment, including working with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA).	March 2026
Use the Place Based Investment Strategy to work with businesses and developers to identify opportunities to unlock or accelerate private sector investment.	December 2024
Building on the success of the Council's housing development and acquisitions programme, engage with the wider sector to secure housing-led private investment particularly in areas of economic growth.	Ongoing

**Recommendation 4: Develop effective pathways and mechanisms for local people, especially young people, to benefit from inclusive growth that can help to deliver improved health outcomes and address inequalities.**

**What the peers said:** Facilitating local people to connect into growth opportunities through clear pathways to new skills, jobs and business opportunities will ensure that economic growth is inclusive and brings tangible social value.

Actions we plan to take	Timescales for delivery
Ensure that we have a consistent employment offer, supporting all ages with an additional focus on young people, which will bring together existing programmes including skills, employment pathways and access to employment under a distinct Council wide work programme. This will provide strategic and	March 2025

operational direction for the employment pathways, supporting the Council's delivery of an Inclusive Economy.	
Ensure that new business initiatives such as the new £5.4m incubation hub at Manvers and the South Yorkshire MCA new investment zone provides growth opportunities, aiming to incentivise local training, skills development and employment in those areas and whilst fostering entrepreneurship and economic diversity.	September 2024
Continue to embed the Council's Social Value Policy and commitment to the Real Living Wage, with the ambition to create more jobs and skills in the borough.	August 2024

**Recommendation 5: Review performance management with a focus on demonstrating impact and an improvement in outcomes in delivering the council's ambition; and use the strong leadership, capacity and capability of the top-team to drive and deliver further organisational transformations and change across the borough at pace.**

**What the peers said:** Streamline performance management and continue to work with scrutiny to ensure that the process of taking items to scrutiny before they reach Cabinet does not slow down decision-making. Furthermore, maximising the potential of the top-team to take on greater levels of corporate responsibility can drive and deliver future change and transformations at pace, whilst maintaining the strong foundations and good governance that has been put in place.

Actions we plan to take	Timescales for delivery
Develop an outcome-focussed Council Plan for 2025-29 and refreshed performance management framework that is informed by best practice. Performance reporting arrangements will also be reviewed to ensure there is a focus on evidencing outcomes and impacts, using case studies, and linking these to storytelling (as outlined in the actions under recommendation 1).	March 2025
Identification of opportunities for the top team to take on greater levels of corporate responsibility to drive transformation and change	January 2024
Support the Assistant Director Cohort to develop their collective capacity as a team	March 2024

**Recommendation 6: Building on the Neighbourhood working model, develop a clearer and shared understanding of integrated locality working across the public sector and increase the pace of digital transformation across the organisation to deliver improved outcomes for residents and consistently improve the customer experience.**

<b>What the peers said:</b> This will help to further modernise the organisation and improve efficiency and effectiveness. Digital transformation should lead to the discontinuing of parallel paper-based processes to avoid duplication, increase efficiency and improve the customer experience. Integrated locality working through increased co-design and co-production of solutions and services alongside partner organisations can deliver enhanced outcomes for residents through improved services and solutions which are tailored to their needs.	
<b>Actions we plan to take</b>	<b>Timescales for delivery</b>
Develop a clear vision and work programme for integrated locality working under the Thriving Neighbourhoods workstream, in line with the ambitions set out in the Council Plan and Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy.	March 2024
Continue to deliver the Customer Service work programme to increase the ease of access to the number of services that can be accessed online and to drive further digital transformation	Ongoing work programme
Continue to deliver the Customer Experience Programme through the Customer Experience Board	Ongoing work programme

<b>Recommendation 7: Continue to keep the medium-term financial strategy under review - testing assumptions and undertaking sensitivity analysis – and continue to report to Members on a regular basis.</b>	
<b>What the peers said:</b> Using scenario planning and reviewing the medium-term financial strategy helps to identify options when there are uncertainties over future funding arrangements and volatility in the economy. This will enable the council to stress test demand-led budgets and assess risks to fully understand and reflect the impact of variables going forward. Continuing to keep Members updated on the fiscal health of the organisation and associated risks will ensure they maintain a strong grip on the budget.	
<b>Actions we plan to take</b>	<b>Timescales for delivery</b>
Continue to review and revise the MTFS working assumptions throughout the year along with continued formal reporting:	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MTFS update/position statement briefing to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board</li> <li>- MTFS update/position statement report to Cabinet</li> <li>- Budget and MTFS report to Cabinet and Council</li> </ul>	November 2023 November 2023 February 2024
Continue to report finance updates to Cabinet on a regular basis in accordance with the constitution	Ongoing, with next report in September 2023

## PART A - Initial Equality Screening Assessment

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an Equality Analysis (Part B).

Further information is available in the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance – see page 9.

### 1. Title

**Title:** LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan

**Directorate:** Assistant Chief Executive

**Service area:** Policy, Performance and Intelligence

**Lead person:** Fiona Boden

**Contact:** Simon Dennis

Is this a:

☐

**Strategy / Policy**

☐

**Service / Function**

☒

**Other**

**If other, please specify:**

Reporting the result of an external inspection and obtaining Cabinet's approval to a high level action plan.

### 2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) took place between 5 – 8 June 2023 and the findings were received in August 2023 (see Appendix 1 of the main report). In response to the findings the Council has produced a high-level Action Plan (see Appendix 2) for approval by Cabinet.

### 3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>	✓	
Could the proposal affect service users? <i>(Be mindful that this is not just about numbers. A potential to affect a small number of people in a significant way is as important)</i>		✓
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics? <i>(Consider potential discrimination, harassment or victimisation of individuals with protected characteristics)</i>	✓	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal? <i>(It is important that the Council is transparent and consultation is carried out with members of the public to help mitigate future challenge)</i>		✓
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from commissioning or procurement)</i>	✓	
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices? <i>(If the answer is yes you may wish to seek advice from your HR business partner)</i>		✓
If you have answered no to all the questions above, please explain the reason		

If you have answered **no** to **all** the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

#### 4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals before decisions are made.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below using the prompts for guidance and complete an Equality Analysis (Part B).

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

The publication of the LGA report has no direct impact in itself on Council Services and accessibility. However, the high-level action plan will lead to impacts on equalities as the actions either involve both continuing to deliver initiatives already in place or prompt the development of a more detailed action for the future. Any future initiatives or events arising from the plan should be subject to their own separate assessment.

- **Key findings**

Whilst the overall publication of the report does not impact on equalities, there are specific actions in the high-level action plan that could have an equalities implication. These include, but are not limited to:

- The need to ensure that the wider celebration event for the workforce and any stakeholder event is held in a way to enable all employees to participate irrespective of protected characteristics.
- The action to "Hold an event to bring stakeholders together, to capture people's views to help update the Rotherham Story and have a positive place narrative for the borough" needs to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are appropriately engaged and this event will need to be carried out in line with the requirements of the Consultation and Engagement Toolkit.
- The need to ensure that the response to recommendation 4 of the Peer Challenge (which requires the development of effective pathways and mechanisms for local people, especially young people) effectively addresses the need to ensure any pathway specifically addresses all protected characteristics and not just young people.
- The improvement of outcomes for all residents, required as part of recommendation 6, needs the Council to ensure that improved outcomes and customer experience is delivered irrespective of the protected characteristics of those residents.

Any further consultation that is required as part of the response to the action plan will be delivered in line with the Consultation and Engagement Toolkit and these outcomes will inform future the equalities assessments connected to those actions.

- Actions**

A full Equality Analysis will be completed once the detailed action plan has been produced. This will be done following the consultation event in November 2023. Should any of the listed actions require a separate Cabinet decision, they will be subject to a separate Equality Analysis in the usual manner.

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:	November 2023
Date to complete your Equality Analysis:	January 2024
Lead person for your Equality Analysis (Include name and job title):	Simon Dennis Corporate Improvement and Risk Manager

## 5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Fiona Boden	Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence	23/8/23

## 6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to [equality@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk) For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

<b>Date screening completed</b>	22/8/23
<b>Report title and date</b>	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
<b>If relates to a Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision – report date and date sent for publication</b>	Cabinet report 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 – publication date 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
<b>Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement</b> <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a>	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2023



## Appendix 4 - Carbon Impact Assessment – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from transport?	None				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	None				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None				
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				
<p>Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:</p> <p>This report is principally concerned with formally publishing the outcome of the recent LGA Peer Challenge and its associated high level action plan. The report itself has no direct impact on emissions and, should there be any emissions impact from action arising in the high level action plan at Appendix 2, these will be assessed separately.</p>					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

At this point there are no relevant emission impacts to consider. Where progress on actions contained in the action plan imply a specific definable impact on emissions, this will be included indicatively.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Simon Dennis  Policy, Performance and Intelligence, Assistant Chief Executives Directorate.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	None
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	N/A
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	CIA137

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet - 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2023

**Report Title**

Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

**Report Author(s)**

Luke Sayers, Assistant Director of Customer, Information and Digital Services  
01709 823249 or [Luke.Sayers@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Luke.Sayers@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

Digital inclusion remains a challenge for some people in Rotherham and a lack of digital access can have a detrimental impact on residents. The associated problems can be significant for citizens and families contributing to educational and economic disadvantage, health inequalities and increased social isolation.

The Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion programme was established in 2021 to gain a better understanding of the extent to which digital exclusion affects our local communities; and to identify the barriers that prevent people accessing and benefiting from online services and digital channels.

Through consultations held with a wide range of local people, the cross-organisational Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group has since co-created a Digital Inclusion strategy and action plan that has been designed to target those in the borough that are most at risk of digital exclusion.

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the progress of the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion programme and to seek their endorsement and support to the approach being taken.

## **Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the work undertaken to date as part of the Digital Inclusion programme.
2. Endorse the co-designed Digital Inclusion Strategy and support the approach being taken to help people and communities who are most at risk from digital exclusion.

## **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion strategy

Appendix 2 Digital Inclusion Action Plan

Appendix 3 Equality Analysis – Part A

Appendix 4 Equality Analysis – Part B

Appendix 5 Carbon Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

N/A

## **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None –

## **Council Approval Required**

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan

### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Programme was established in June 2021 to achieve the following outcomes:
- Tackle inequalities within our communities that digital exclusion contributes to.
  - Work with the third sector to develop and support community engagement and a sustainability model.
  - Maintain and build the Digital Inclusion Partnership.
  - Identify and capitalise on social accountability across health and social care.
  - Establish a temporary 'digital inclusion group' to support the above outcomes and ensure all interested parties and organisations are involved.
  - Work with partners to improve and expand their digital offers.
  - Identify and pool potential match funding to support the programme and future sustainability.
  - Increase the take up of online services across the borough and sustain and grow digital engagement to the benefit of all.
- 1.2 The programme funding was secured through the NHS Digital Aspirant Programme grant (£200,000), RMBC Capital Digital Strategy (£200,000) and 2021/22 Council revenue budget (£50,000).
- 1.3 A cross organisational stakeholder working group was established to jointly input into and shape the aims and outcome of the Digital Inclusion programme; ensuring the needs of all customers and communities within the Rotherham place are fully considered and represented in all digital inclusion activities and reflected within a future co-designed Digital Inclusion strategy.
- 1.4 The Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group currently consists of representation from different organisations within the Rotherham Place including AGE UK Rotherham, Rotherfed, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR), Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), NHS, RNN Colleges and Rotherham Council; although membership invitations are likely to be extended as the delivery of the programme progresses.
- 1.5 The Council's Year Ahead Delivery Plan, sets out the following Digital Inclusion outcomes and timescales:

Expanding economic opportunity					
Ref	Outcome	Activity	Lead officer	Lead directorate	Timescales for delivery (from and to)

4.12	Strengthening digital infrastructure and skills which enable access for all	Identify measures to improve digital inclusion through consultation with communities.	Luke Sayers <i>Assistant Director Customer, Information and Digital</i>	Finance and Customer Services	December 2022 - <b>Complete</b>
4.13		Develop a Digital Inclusion Strategy.	Luke Sayers <i>Assistant Director Customer, Information and Digital</i>	Finance and Customer Services	December 2022 - July 2023 <b>Complete</b>

- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's endorsement of the programme together with their continued support in delivering the actions identified to increase digital inclusion across the borough.

## 2. Key Issues

- 2.1 When the Digital Inclusion programme was first established, it became apparent that whilst both national and regional data provided an indication of digital activity/engagement across the Yorkshire/Humber region, the extent to which local people felt digitally excluded was unknown.
- 2.2 An independent Rotherham Digital Inclusion baseline review was therefore undertaken between January and March 2022. This involved over 700 residents who took part via face-to-face focus groups, postal questions and online surveys; each participant sharing their views and experiences of using technology, and their digital worries and concerns.
- 2.3 The baseline review identified:
- Groups that are at high-risk of digital inclusion:
    - Older People
    - Deprivation
    - Long Term Conditions / Learning Disability
    - Disadvantaged Young People
  - Areas of the borough at particularly high-risk of digital exclusion as a result of the combination of deprivation and poor internet infrastructure:
    - East Herringthorpe
    - Rotherham Central
    - Thrybergh
    - Maltby East
  - Common barriers to digital inclusion:
    - Internet availability in venues such as sheltered housing.

- Language.
- Residents wanting more 'one to one' support to help them use their own devices and be more aware of internet safely.
- Age – increasing age increases the need for digital support, but there are also pockets of younger people who are at risk of being digitally excluded.
- Based on the survey responses around 54% of residents need some form of digital support.

2.4 The review provided the Council and other Stakeholder group members with a better understanding of:

- The level and quality of the 'digital offer' of services within the Rotherham Place.
- Local appetite for digital inclusion.
- Barriers that prevent the people of Rotherham accessing and benefiting from online services and digital channels.
- Groups and areas of the borough that are most at risk of digital exclusion.
- Existing digital inclusion activity (and gaps) across the Rotherham Place.
- The digital maturity of Rotherham provider organisations based on the 'What Good Looks Like' (WGLL) framework which is used to accelerate digital and data transformation.

### 3. **Options considered and recommended proposal**

#### 3.1 **Option 1 – Do nothing (not recommended)**

One of the primary aims of the Digital Inclusion programme was to identify the extent to which local people are digitally excluded.

The Rotherham Place baseline review provided this evidence; identifying both the challenges individual people/groups are facing, and the extent to which digital inequality is affecting some parts of the borough.

These findings confirm that digital exclusion remains a challenge in Rotherham, contributing to educational and economic disadvantage, health inequalities and increased social isolation.

If action is not taken, some communities will continue to face digital inequality and be unable to overcome the barriers that prevent them from being able to access/do things online that others take for granted.

#### 3.2 **Option 2 – Recommended**

Endorse the co-designed Digital Inclusion Strategy and support the approach being taken to help people and communities who are most at risk from digital exclusion.

### 3.2.1 Digital Inclusion Strategy

Based on the findings of the Rotherham Place Baseline review, members of the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group worked collaboratively to create the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion strategy. **(Appendix 1)**.

The strategy is person centred and is aligned with the Rotherham Together Partnership and Place Board priorities. It has been deliberately designed to:

- Focus on the things that matter to people who live, work and do business in Rotherham.
- Ensure that anyone who reads it can identify with something in the strategy.
- Be accessible and understandable – using simple, plain and meaningful language with no ‘jargon’.

### 3.2.2 Digital Inclusion Action Plan

A workshop was held in November 2022 with both residents and organisational representatives. This session was used to agree how best to support Rotherham’s most digitally excluded people and communities, and to identify the actions that would be needed to deliver the outcomes set out in the strategy.

The resultant co-designed Digital Inclusion Action Plan **(Appendix 2)** sets out a range of targeted activities and initiatives to be delivered over the next 12-18 months.

There is no single solution to improving digital inclusion as technology is constantly evolving at speed. The programme’s fundamental approach will therefore be based on test and learn methodology; making best use of resident stories and case studies to highlight successes and identify future opportunities. This will be achieved by:

- Maintaining constant dialogue with all delivery partners, and more importantly through conversations with those who are directly receiving help.
- Consistent and frequent user consultation.
- Capturing evidence of how initiatives and activities are helping residents and enabling them to become more digitally included and active.
- Being confident and decisive as a group.



- Listening to feedback so that we can quickly change or amend anything that isn't working and refocus our energies.
- Keeping residents updated about the programme.
- Re-visiting the groups that took part in the initial baseline report research to share progress and find out from them how the programme is making a difference.

### 3.2.3 **Activities already underway:**

#### **i) RNN Digital Champions**

A volunteer programme has been jointly developed with the RNN group. Students attending Rotherham college who are undertaking a digital qualification are encouraged to volunteer as 'digital champions' to gain experience of working with local people and help them make better use of technology.

- 10 community groups have signed up to be involved in the initial pilot.
- There are 18 student volunteers, who have each been matched to a group that is local to where they live to help limit travelling distances.
- Sessions held to date include:
  - Bramley Coffee Morning, Bill Chafer Centre
  - Catchup Café, Rotherham Minster
  - Mindfulness & Wellbeing, Kimberworth Park
  - The Salvation Army, Maltby

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

- Students say they have felt accepted and welcomed, increasing their communication skills and confidence.
- Community groups have said how extremely useful they found it
- Students have told us that since volunteering, they now feel less nervous going out on placements outside of college.
- RNN feel this work has helped them further strengthen their link with the community which has also led to requests for assistance with other activities unrelated to digital inclusion.

The initiative is set to continue when the college reopens in September.

#### **ii) Good Things Databank Pilot with the libraries**

Good Things Foundation offer free sim cards to organisations through their Databank programme.

This is a national programme designed to support people on low income who have limited/no access to online services.

Rotherham Council are piloting the scheme which was launched in May from Riverside House library; enabling local people who might otherwise be unable to afford to communicate/engage digitally to benefit from a free mobile data, calls and texts.

A phased roll out of the free sim card initiative to other Library & Neighbourhood sites will commence in September (Maltby, Rawmarsh, Dinnington and Swinton).

Subject to the success of the initial pilot, it is anticipated that other Stakeholder organisations will sign up to the scheme. In addition, the Digital Support Officers, once in post, will have the ability to offer sim cards directly through their work in the community.

### **iii) ICT Classes and Employability classes for residents**

Free training courses on specific subjects (e.g. Excel and Word) are available across Rotherham, allowing individuals to upskill themselves ready for employment.

Work will continue with the deliverers of these training modules to ensure what they offer is fit for purpose and is promoted in the right way to target those people/communities most likely to benefit.

#### **3.2.4 Future Activities and Initiatives**

The Digital Inclusion Action Plan provides a detailed list of all activities and initiatives expected to be delivered over the next 12-18 month period.

Examples include:

- Appointment of 2 FTE Digital Support Officers – to undertake the activities identified in the action plan and deliver interventions across Rotherham Place. These post holders will spend most of their time working within the communities of Rotherham.
- Creation of 'digital surgeries' in libraries and community centres; initially as a pilot in one of the areas most at risk of digital exclusion (East Herringthorpe, Rotherham Central, Thrybergh, Maltby East). Surgeries will be organised as 'drop in' sessions for anyone wanting to learn more about 'how to do' things digitally. For example, attach a photo to an email, call someone using WhatsApp etc.
- Devices – the baseline report indicates that device ownership is a real barrier to being digitally included. There are various best practice examples in other authorities that provide evidence of success with schemes such as device lending services and 'gifting' using previously

owned donated devices. This is something that the Stakeholder group are keen to explore and introduce as a proof of concept.

- Community engagement across Rotherham - A key part of the success of this programme is reaching as many people as possible from different demographics within Rotherham; particularly those groups that are harder to reach. A Communication Plan has therefore been created specifically to target people who:
  - Don't use technology and don't plan on using it in the future.
  - Don't have any experience with technology, or don't have the means to get technology - but would really like to have it and learn how to use it.
  - Use some technology but would like help to use it more and improve their digital skills.
  - Are financially excluded from digital.
  - Are digitally confident and want to help others, or signpost them to us (*friends and family digital helpers*).

### 3.2.5 Evaluation and programme sustainability

A robust and transparent measurement framework has been implemented and adopted, providing the evidence source for continuous evaluation of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Programme and the impact it is having on the lives of local people.

The Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group will also continue to explore options for additional funding and/or opportunities to benefit from social value and local/national initiatives that contribute to the delivery of the identified actions.

Evaluating the effectiveness of digital inclusion interventions will demonstrate how the programme has added value; the evidence from which can be used to inform "what future delivery would look like.

## 4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The specification document outlining the objectives and intended outcomes of the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Baseline review was created and signed off by all members of the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group.
- 4.2 Over 500 local people shared their thoughts and comments as part of the independent research undertaken to produce the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Baseline review:
  - 454 online surveys received.
  - 67 postal surveys returned (500 sent out).

- 9 focus group sessions held across the borough in areas with high levels of deprivation and groups where English isn't the first language.

4.3 Rotherham provider organisations completed a self-assessment across seven key areas using the 'What Good Looks Like' (WGLL) framework which organisations can choose to use to accelerate digital and data transformation. Providers who contributed included VAR, Rotherfed, Clifton Learning Partnership, RMBC, AGE UK Rotherham, and three NHS trusts.

4.4 The strategy and Action Plan workshop that took place in November 2022 was attended by residents and organisational representatives from AGE UK Rotherham, RotherFed, Rotherham Older Peoples Forum, RNN Group, RDASH, NHS, and Rotherham Council.

## 5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 The co-designed Digital Inclusion Action Plan sets out a range of targeted activities and initiatives to be delivered over the next 12-18 month period.

5.2 The Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group are responsible for reviewing the progress of the Action Plan; and for ensuring resources and activities focus on the priority groups and communities identified in the baseline review.

5.3 The Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan have been endorsed by the Rotherham Place Board (May 23) and approved by the Rotherham Together Partnership Chief Executive Officers Group (July 23). Further updates will be provided periodically to both the Rotherham Place Board and Rotherham Together Partnership Board.

5.4 Timescale for key actions:

Action	Timescales
Cabinet endorsement of the Digital Inclusion programme, strategy and related actions	September 2023
Launch of Digital Inclusion website	September 2023
Phased roll out of free sim cards to other Library & Neighbourhood Hubs	September 2023
Pilot of digital drop-in centre model	October 2023
12 Month programme review	June 2024

### 5.1 **Next steps and future actions**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Notes the work undertaken to date as part of the Digital Inclusion programme.
2. Endorse the co-designed Digital Inclusion Strategy and support the approach being taken to help people and communities who are most at risk from digital exclusion.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 Of the original funding, referenced in paragraph 1.2, £334k was available at the start of this financial year (2023/24). Staffing and resource costs required to deliver the action plan are fully funded within the original budget. This includes three staff posts and the cost of website development and digital infrastructure.
- 6.2 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendations detailed in this report. If there is an identified need during the delivery of the action plan to engage third party suppliers for goods, works or services this must be procured in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 Although this is a non-statutory function, leadership by the Council of the Digital Inclusion agenda across the Borough will assist the Council in the delivery of its other core functions as set out in body of the report, along with the associated benefits described above.
- 7.2 The activities as described in this report are not reserved to Council in legislation or regulations and therefore are executive functions, exercisable by the Cabinet.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 Due consideration would need to be given to any staff employed on a temporary basis, a redundancy payment would potentially be made to those employees who work under a contract of employment with the Council, regardless of the number of hours worked per week, and have at least 2 years' continuous service.
- 8.2 Due HR processes would be followed to mitigate any risk of redundancy and support the employees to finding suitable alternative employment where possible.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 The Digital Inclusion Action Plan sets out a series of activities and initiatives that focus on the groups considered to be most at risk of digital exclusion (as identified in the baseline review); which includes disadvantaged young

people and people of all ages who may be vulnerable through deprivation, long term care or learning disability.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 An Equality Analysis has been undertaken (Appendices 4,5. The Digital Inclusion strategy forms the framework from which the Digital Inclusion programme will tackle the digital divide for all communities and groups.
- 10.2 Both the strategy and action plan have been designed to focus on improving access to technology and increasing digital confidence and skills for all residents and communities; with particular regard to groups with protected characteristics who may be more likely to experience digital exclusion.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 A Carbon Impact assessment has been undertaken (Appendix 5)
- 11.2 The Digital Inclusion programme aims to encourage individuals to reduce their digital carbon footprint by managing electronic devices properly and more efficiently.

It will also encourage targeted groups to have greater dependency on digital technologies which can hopefully alter their day to day activities – for example an increase in online banking, online shopping, e-books, streaming etc will mean fewer journeys and healthier environments.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1. The Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group includes representation from the Council, Age UK, Rotherfed, VAR, REMA, NHS, and RNN Colleges. Programme decisions are made in collaboration with all group members.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 There are robust governance arrangements in place whereby updates regarding the achievement of the programme actions and outcomes are regularly shared with the Rotherham Place Board and Rotherham Together Partnership Board.
- 13.2 A regular review of the risk register is undertaken by the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group who will jointly identify and agree appropriate mitigative action.

## **14. Accountable Officers**

Luke Sayers, Assistant Director Customer Information & Digital Services,  
Finance & Customer Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	04/09/23
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	30/08/23
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	30/08/23

*Report Author: Luke Sayers, Assistant Director of Customer, Information and Digital Services*

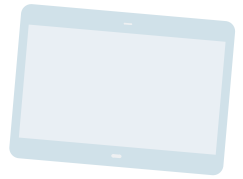
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# Rotherham Digital Inclusion Strategy



# What is digital inclusion?

*Making sure that people are given the opportunity to use and access technology to do things that benefit them everyday.*

## What are the benefits of being online?



### Finding a job

- More jobs now are only advertised online and the process to apply is often online only
- More employers require some level of digital skills



### Keeping in touch

- Talk to friends and family through video or telephone calls, messages, or emails



### Shopping

- It can be cheaper and more convenient to buy things online
- Find better deals for the things you need using comparison sites to find an energy supplier, mobile phone package and makes it easier to switch



### Knowledge and learning

- The internet can help you find information, learn new skills, learn a new language, or keep up to date with news and events from around Rotherham and the world



### Health

- Book and manage health appointments online 24/7
- View and manage your personal health information
- Improved access to health services and information



### Entertainment and lifestyle

- Watching online TV services for your favourite box sets
- Tips and tricks for your hobbies, including finding recipes
- Buy tickets to events



### Financial

- Online banking, apply for and access Council/Government services (including Benefits)



### Travel

- Book holidays, check-in at the airport and get your NHS Covid Pass
- Travel around using a Sat Nav or online map

# Why do we need a Digital Inclusion Strategy?

*We want every resident in Rotherham to be able to enjoy the benefits of getting online.*

We asked people who live and work in Rotherham about their views and experiences of using technology and their worries and concerns.

## This is what they told us...

I haven't used technology before. I don't have the skills or money to afford it but would like help to start using it.



I don't have any experience with technology, or don't have the means to get technology but would really like some help.



I do use some technology but would like help to obtain more and improve my digital skills.



I have got all the technology I need and don't need any more support.



Everyone is different, but there is something for everyone



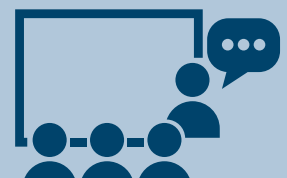
If technology isn't for you, that's fine but if you change your mind, help and support is available and we'd love to talk to you about it.



We want to help you learn about digital, as well as how to use and access devices.



We want to help improve your digital skills in a way that's flexible to your needs.



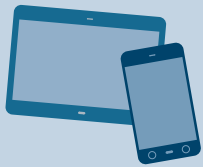
**Can you help?**  
We can support you to share your knowledge with others.



We want to help you get online and feel more confident about using technology so you can do the things you want to do.

## Based on what you told us we will:

### Help you get online



Help you with phones, tablets and sim cards.



Increase the number of places where free Wifi can be accessed across Rotherham.

### Help you learn



Show you how to use the internet and devices including computers, tablets and phone.



We want to offer flexible learning in your community and ensure schools and employers are improving the digital literacy of their students or workers.

### Help keep you safe



We know how important it is for people to feel safe online and will provide you with advice and guidance.

### Help through volunteering



We will help people who want to volunteer by putting them in touch with organisations across Rotherham who are providing support within the community where people need it.

## Why we want to help you become more digitally included

- Some organisations only provide services or reduced costs online
- You can talk to organisations online, which is quicker than sending a letter
- Accessing help online will give you more choices and give you the information you need to make important decisions in your life when you need to make them.

## Find out more

This document will be reviewed annually, and we welcome your feedback. If you need this information in another format or language, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Email: [rotherhamdigital@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:rotherhamdigital@rotherham.gov.uk)

Website: [www.rotherhamdigital.co.uk/](http://www.rotherhamdigital.co.uk/)

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## Digital Inclusion Rotherham Action Plan April 2023 to September 2025

### Phase 1 - Information gathering (Completed)

#### **i) Objective:**

*A third-party organisation with a proven track record of assessing and analysing digital inclusion/exclusion, be commissioned to:*

- Identify and profile the target group within the Rotherham Place.
- Understand the local barriers to digital inclusion at an individual and Rotherham Place level.
- Identify existing digital inclusion activity (and the gaps) across the Rotherham Place.
- Identify best practice Digital Inclusion activities and programmes at a local and national level to inform the type of digital inclusion activities that best respond to the broad wide needs and aspirations.

Ref	Outcome	Actions	Lead / Org	Timescales	Progress	Baseline Ref / Priority
1.1	Robust and effective programme governance in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form a Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group with a diverse set of members from organisations across Rotherham to help form the strategy and action plan. This group will meet monthly</li> <li>• Appoint Digital Delivery Manager</li> <li>• Establish a governance framework that ensures accountability to the Rotherham Place Partnership Board and the Rotherham Together Partnership</li> </ul>	H. Barker RMBC A. Clayton NHS	Complete November 2021		

1.2	Digital Inclusion Baseline report provides place-based evidence of digital inclusion/exclusion in Rotherham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and sign off a specification document.</li> <li>• Appoint an independent research specialist to produce a Rotherham place baseline review to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National and Rotherham population level analysis</li> <li>• Consultation with residents across all channels, with particular focus on groups most likely at risk of digital inclusion.</li> <li>• An indication of the digital maturity of organisations in Rotherham</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review report to ensure meets requirements specified</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	<p>Complete November 2021</p> <p>Complete November 2021</p> <p>Report completed and published April 22</p>		
<b><u>Phase 2 - Develop evidence-based intervention strategies and programme governance (Complete)</u></b>						
<p>i) <b>Objective</b> (based on the findings derived from Phase 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Develop a Digital Inclusion strategy, the outcomes of which can be delivered by a range of projects and initiatives that target Rotherham's most digitally excluded using the most appropriate method of delivery within the budget available.</i></li> </ul>						
Ref	Outcome	Actions	Lead / Org	Timescales	Progress	Baseline Ref / Priority

2.1	Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan created in response to priorities identified in Baseline review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workshop with representatives from different organisations across Rotherham inputting into the creation of a Digital Inclusion Action Plan.</li> <li>Financial Plan completed and signed off by budget holder (RMBC)</li> <li>Work up a one-page visual document to highlight the work intended in 2023</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group  P Rushton/L Williams RMBC P Woodhouse RMBC	April 23  March 23 March 23	Drafts in progress  Drafts in progress Drafts in progress	
2.2	Strategy and Action Plan supported by all organisations represented at the stakeholder group, Place Board and Rotherham Together Partnership Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sign off final version of strategy and action plan by respective organisations/people</li> <li>Presentation to Place Board</li> <li>Presentation to Rotherham Together Partnership Board</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group  H Barker RMBC/ A Clayton NHS  H Barker RMBC/ A Clayton NHS	March 23  April 23 May 23		
2.3	Publication of a Place Based Digital Inclusion Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder group to make the agreed Digital Inclusion strategy publicly available</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	TBC	launched when the website goes live – Scheduled for September	
2.4	Communication Strategy in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a communications plan for the programme</li> </ul>	W Wilcock RMBC	February 23 - Ongoing	This is a live document; subject to frequent review	
2.5	Action plan visual document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a visual one-page action plan for purposes of sharing externally. It will follow the same visual style of as the strategy</li> </ul>	P Woodhouse RMBC W Wilcock RMBC	Completed March 23		

Phase 3 - Delivery (In Progress)						
<p><b>i) Objective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following the completion of phases 1 and two, identify the different delivery mechanisms that can add most value to the communities of Rotherham.</li> </ul>						
Ref	Outcome	Actions	Lead / Org	Timescales	Progress	Baseline Ref / Priority
3.1	Key roles in place to focus on delivering the Digital Inclusion Action Plan in Rotherham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit a small team to work on delivering the action plan and Digital interventions in the community</li> <li>1 FTE Digital Inclusion Delivery Manager</li> <li>2 FTE Digital Support Officers</li> </ul>	H Barker RMBC A. Clayton NHS	Sep 23	Job advertised July 23. Not received suitable candidates, so will be re-advertising the role	Page 5, 55,63
3.2	Residents of Rotherham to have increased access to technology including Wi-Fi, Devices and sim cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map 'free Wi-Fi' locations</li> <li>Publish this information both on the website and using offline methods</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Team	Sept 23	This links to Website launch	
3.3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch a National Databank pilot in RMBC libraries starting initially in Riverside House to offer free sim cards to residents.</li> </ul>	A Heggie RMBC	Launched April 23 - Onwards	Launched 9 <sup>th</sup> May from Riverside only. To be expanded to 4 more libraries in September	
3.4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the feasibility of installing free Wi-Fi in community settings:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify pilot location – to be based in one of the following high priority areas: East Herringthorpe, Rotherham Central, Thrybergh or Maltby East</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Team	May 23 Onwards	Initial research phase with Sky and BT to determine a out personal v business. Will work with the stakeholder group to eventually identify a pilot location from one of the high priority areas,	Page 28 - Feedback from residents



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement</li> <li>• Measure impact and outcomes</li> <li>• Determine whether model can/should be rolled out more widely</li> <li>• Create model that can be sustained moving forward</li> </ul>				
3.5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the assisted technology teams in RMBC to make sure activities/priorities are aligned</li> <li>• Promote technology that helps people with their health.</li> <li>• Engage and link up with various departments and boards within Public Health</li> <li>• Engage and Link into mental health organisations / networks as the cost-of-living crisis is having a huge impact in this area</li> <li>• Engage and Link into the Rotherham Prevention and Health Inequalities group</li> </ul>	<p>P Woodhouse RMBC</p> <p>P Woodhouse RMBC</p> <p>P Woodhouse RMBC</p> <p>P Woodhouse RMBC</p> <p>P Woodhouse RMBC</p> <p>A Clayton NHS</p>	<p>April 23 Onwards</p> <p>April 23 Onwards</p> <p>Sept 23</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Engaging with Sandra Whiting and the Assisted Tech team</p> <p>Included on website</p> <p>Presentation to Health and Wellbeing board by Helen Barker is scheduled for September</p> <p>PW has presented to the Health and Inequalities group</p>	
3.6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with the NHS to on their Virtual Wards programme</li> </ul>	P Woodhouse RMBC	Ongoing	PW is part of the Digital Board for Virtual Wards	

3.7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and explore the feasibility of offering a device loaning or gifting scheme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a proof of concept</li> <li>Implement</li> <li>Measure impact and outcomes</li> <li>Determine whether model can/should be rolled out more widely</li> <li>Create model that can be sustained moving forward</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Team/ Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	May 23 Onwards	<p>PW has spoken to a number of other towns / cities who have successful schemes, and this is still in the research phase. Will be a priority of the team once new roles in post.</p> <p>The employment hub have a set of 10 tablets that they are happy could be used for this pilot.</p> <p>The libraries have expressed interest in being the base for these, but further discussions to be had with the stakeholder group to determine its scope</p>	Page 52,56
3.8	Provide information that gives people more confidence in being safe online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify local organisations to engage with to deliver safety talks into their community</li> <li>Engage with Safer Rotherham Partnership</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Team	March 23 Onwards	Agreed with RMBC Community Safety team to do some in the community safety talks. Would also be part of the Digital Support Officer roles. Can also engage with other organisations, have a contact at the police to speak to.	
3.9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signpost to existing online safety information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and make use of already published good practice safety guidelines</li> <li>Promote using online methods (website, YouTube etc) but also when out in the community</li> <li>Work with organisations to help support young people</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	CS Web team RMBC  Digital Inclusion Team/CS web Team  Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group  Digital Inclusion team	April 23 Onwards	Awaiting Website launch	Page 36, 56

		<p>with information about being safer using social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote safety information to parents/carers to help them feel better informed as to the different types of social media out there, their uses and risks.</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group / W.Wilcock (RMBC)			
3.10	<p>Help residents across Rotherham increase their Digital Skills:</p> <p>Activities and actions to be initially focused on the high-risk groups (Older People, Deprivation, LTC / Learning Disability, Disadvantaged Young People) living in the high risk wards (East Herringthorpe, Rotherham Central, Thrybergh, Maltby East)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify organisations across Rotherham currently offering free digital skills training.</li> <li>Promote and share these opportunities via Rotherham digital website, partner websites, social media and whilst out in the community.</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion team  All	Ongoing	Part of the website content	
3.11		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create 'digital surgeries' in libraries and community centres in East Herringthorpe, Rotherham Central, Thrybergh, Maltby East) (where people can drop in to learn more about digital and how to do things online)</li> </ul>	A Clayton NHS  Digital Inclusion Team	May 23 Onwards	Focus for the new Digital Support Officers once in post	
3.12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish volunteer programme with RNN whereby Digital students go into community groups to help residents with their use of technology</li> </ul>	P Woodhouse RMBC  D Smith RNN	March 23 Onwards	First phase was very successful with great feedback. Will start again in September when the students return to college	Page 28, 63

3.13		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a longer term plan of community-based activities linking in with existing and established outreach programmes eg. Warm welcome, poverty &amp; financial inclusion</li> <li>Create activities that focus on helping residents with their digital skills</li> <li>Provide and promote an easy way for residents to seek help if unsure how to do something online</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Team	May 23 Onwards	Will be a main focus of the new Digital Support Officer Roles once in post	Page 55
3.14	Residents use and develop their digital skills working in the voluntary sector to help others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a digital champion model that compliments existing volunteer programmes across Rotherham</li> </ul>	Stakeholder group members	Ongoing		Page 56,63
3.15		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with community groups to encourage people to become involved in volunteering so they can support other people in their local area</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion team/ Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	Ongoing		Page 56,63
3.16	Opportunities seized to learn from the best practice of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue dialogue and learning from all the current work happening in other parts of the country to learn from best practice and identify opportunities for shared benefit.</li> </ul>	P Woodhouse RMBC	Ongoing	Continued communication, for eg ,recently with Barnsley to talk about their Databank and their digital champion roles, and Stockport to talk about their device gifting service	
3.17	A robust and effective Communication Strategy is in place to ensure the Digital inclusion programme is communicated across Rotherham using both online and offline methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish the Digital Inclusion Strategy in different formats so people can find out more about the programme aims and support available</li> </ul>	W Wilcock RMBC CS Web Team RMBC	Sept 23	Starts with launch of website	
3.18		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch the 'Rotherham Digital' website:</li> </ul>	W Wilcock RMBC	Sept 23		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website that captures all Digital Inclusion information, case studies, best practice, and activity in Rotherham,</li> <li>Promote the website through social media and other available messaging to encourage and inform residents, communities, and businesses.</li> </ul>				
3.19		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote digital inclusion work using all available offline and online communication channels so people are aware of what's happening, how they can get involved, and how they can access the help and support they may need</li> <li>Plan attendance at events across Rotherham like the Rotherham Show and various roadshows.</li> <li>Create easy way for organisations to make contact to share information about their Digital Inclusion activity and/or request support/help.</li> </ul>	W Wilcock RMBC Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group  Digital Inclusion team  Digital Inclusion team	Ongoing  Start of each financial year  June 2023		
<b><u>Phase 4: Develop a sustainability and ongoing financial model (longer term)</u></b>						
<b>I) <u>Objective</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Evaluate the effectiveness of digital inclusion interventions to demonstrate how the programme has added value; the evidence from which can be used to inform "what future delivery would look like."</i></li> <li><i>Agree a programme of continued support for all partner organisations to establish digital inclusion activities as a core component of service offerings.</i></li> <li><i>Explore options for additional funding and pool potential match funding to support the programme and future sustainability.</i></li> </ul>						

Ref	Outcome	Actions	Lead / Org	Timescales	Progress	Baseline Ref / Priority
4.1	The effectiveness of the programme is fully evaluated to inform what future delivery would look like	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish measurement mechanisms that are designed to evaluate the impact of actions taken; to both residents and organisations/businesses within the Rotherham Place</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	July 2023	Measuring Impact draft produced. Will form part of the new Digital Support Officers induction to ensure they understand its importance.	
4.2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through established programme governance, ensure the Digital Inclusion programme continues to focus on agreed priorities and is being delivered to timescale within budget</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	Ongoing		
4.3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constantly review the membership of the group to identify any gaps in representation and look to address this by inviting new members to join</li> </ul>	P Woodhouse RMBC	Ongoing		
4.4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share case studies involving local people and community groups to inspire others onto the website and through regular updates to our partners</li> </ul>	P Woodhouse RMBC	Ongoing		
4.5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep a track of national, regional digital inclusion levels and compare against the baseline review</li> </ul>	P Woodhouse RMBC	Ongoing		
4.6	Partner organisations have each established digital inclusion activities as a core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify activities/best practice that should/could be absorbed by all organizations</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	Ongoing		

	component of their service deliver/approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the digital maturity findings of the baseline report to identify organisational gaps</li> <li>Create a library of best practice guidance that all organisations can access when undertaking any work with a digital inclusion aspect</li> </ul>				
4.7	Activities/actions required to further increase digital inclusion have been identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify any actions that have not been completed due to timescales/budget</li> <li>Assess the impact of any work not undertaken and likely risks if not completed</li> <li>Identify critical actions/activities and deliverables that should be considered as key to the continued reduction of digital exclusion</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	Ongoing		
4.8	Options for the future sustainability of the programme have been fully considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Briefing paper created setting out activities undertaken, impact on the Rotherham Place and recommendations/risks of continuing/ending the programme</li> </ul>	Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group	To be completed by July 2024		

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## Appendix 3

**Initial Equality Screening Assessment**

Completed to ensure that the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group have and continue to give proper consideration to equality and diversity when undertaking activities and actions that are designed to improve digital inclusion.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decisions made. It helps determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out a more detailed Equality Impact Assessment

**1. Title**

**Title: Digital Inclusion Programme**

Assessment reviewed and accepted by:

Digital Stakeholder group Members

On:

21<sup>st</sup> March

**2. Please provide a brief description of what has been screened**

The Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Programme was established to:

- Tackle inequalities within our communities that digital exclusion contributes to
- Work with the third sector to develop and support community engagement and a sustainability model
- Maintain and build the Digital Inclusion Partnership
- Identify and capitalise on social accountability across health and social care
- Establish a temporary 'digital inclusion group' to support the above outcomes and ensure all interested parties and organisations are involved
- Work with partners to improve and expand their digital offers
- Identify and pool potential match funding to support the programme and future sustainability
- Increase the take up of online services across the borough and sustain and grow digital engagement to the benefit of all
- Engage with multiple boards, networks and organisations across Rotherham to ensure the programme is aligned with work already happening across the borough.

**3. Relevance to equality and diversity**

Digital inclusion remains a challenge for some people in Rotherham and lack of digital access can have a detrimental impact on residents. The associated problems can be

## Appendix 3

significant for citizens and families contributing to educational and economic disadvantage, health inequalities and increased social isolation.

The Digital Inclusion programme therefore seeks to better understand the barriers that prevent people within our community from accessing digital services by consulting with local people and using this insight to co-design a future strategy that helps support, encourage and increase the take up of online services across the borough to the benefit of all.

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?	X Positive	
Could the proposal affect service users?	X Positive	
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?	X	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?		X
Could the proposal affect how the organisations represented by Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group members commission or procure activities and the way they are organised, provided, located and by whom?	X Positive	
Could the proposal affect the workforce of organisations represented by Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group members	X Positive	

#### 4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

- **How has the Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group considered equality and diversity?**

Equality and diversity is at the heart of the Digital Inclusion programme. Research suggests that digital exclusion is more prevalent amongst groups who are elderly, disabled, and from BAME and socially deprived communities.

- **Key findings**

**Phase 1** of the programme (**Knowledge Gathering**) has been completed.

- An independent research specialist was appointed (Attain) to produce a Rotherham place baseline review which involved:
  - National and Rotherham population level analysis

## Appendix 3

- Consultation with residents:

- 454 online surveys received
- 67 postal surveys returned (500 sent out)
- 9 focus group sessions held across the borough in areas with high levels of deprivation and groups where English isn't the first language

The findings of the Digital Inclusion Rotherham Place Review identified that:

- Groups most at high-risk groups of digital inclusion:
  - Older People
  - Deprivation
  - LTC / Learning Disability
  - Disadvantaged Young People
- Common barriers to digital inclusion:
  - Internet availability in venues such as sheltered housing.
  - Language
  - Residents wanting more one to one support to help them use their own devices and be more aware of internet safely.
  - Age –increasing age increases the need for digital support, but there are also pockets of younger people who are at risk of being digitally excluded
  - Based on the survey responses around 54% of residents need some form of digital support

- **Actions**

Phase 2 of the Digital Inclusion programme:

The Digital Inclusion working group will use the findings of Phase 1, to co-design a strategy that sets out the key areas of focus, improvement aims and objectives, delivery approach, and measurable outcomes.

It is expected that the strategy will underpin a place-based approach to:

1. intervention work with high-risk groups and wards, focussing on areas of deprivation to bring communities together through activities and initiatives that enable targeted support
2. creating the structural foundations for tackling digital inclusion at scale through partnership and collaboration; working together to resource provision and plug any gaps.
3. establishing a social movement to drive the digital enablement of residents who want to become digitally competent, providing co-ordinated borough wide support and more bespoke offers where appropriate to specific customer groups and communities
4. measuring impacts and outcomes using a governance framework that ensures accountability to the Rotherham Together Partnership.

## Appendix 3

Date Equality Analysis considered and scoped:	Completed March 2023
Next review of Equality Analysis	August 2023

### 5. Governance, ownership and approval

Name	Details	Timelines
Digital Inclusion project Manager – P. Woodhouse RMBC	Creating draft EIA screening document	March 2023
Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Group	Sign off of the EIA Continuous review of the EIA	March 2023 Every 6 months

### 6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

A copy of **all** screenings will be made publicly available on the Rotherham digital website.

<b>Date this screening published</b>	TBC
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## PART B – Equality Analysis Form

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

This form:

- Can be used to prompt discussions, ensure that due regard has been given and remove or minimise disadvantage for an individual or group with a protected characteristic
- Involves looking at what steps can be taken to advance and maximise equality as well as eliminate discrimination and negative consequences
- Should be completed before decisions are made, this will remove the need for remedial actions.

Note – An Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A) should be completed prior to this form.

When completing this form consider the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity and other socio-economic groups e.g. parents, single parents and guardians, carers, looked after children, unemployed and people on low incomes, ex-offenders, victims of domestic violence, homeless people etc. – see page 11 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

1. Title	
Equality Analysis title: Digital Inclusion	
Date of Equality Analysis (EA): August 2023	
Directorate: F&CS	Service area: CIDS, Customer Services
Lead Manager: Helen Barker	Contact number: 01709 254530
<p>Is this a:</p> <p> <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy         <input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function         <input type="checkbox"/> Other       </p> <p>If other, please specify</p>	

**2. Names of those involved in the Equality Analysis (Should include minimum of three people) - see page 7 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance**

Name	Organisation	Role (eg service user, managers, service specialist)
Helen Barker	RMBC	Head of Customer Services
Phil Rushton	RMBC	Customer Service Manager
Steve Eling	RMBC	Policy and Equalities Manager

**3. What is already known? - see page 10 of Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance**
**Aim/Scope (who the Policy/Service affects and intended outcomes if known)**

In June 2021, SLT were presented with a report detailing the intention to establish a Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion Programme to:

- Tackle inequalities within our communities that digital exclusion contributes to
- Work with the third sector to develop and support community engagement and a sustainability model
- Maintain and build the Digital Inclusion Partnership
- Identify and capitalise on social accountability across health and social care
- Establish a temporary 'digital inclusion group' to support the above outcomes and ensure all interested parties and organisations are involved
- Work with partners to improve and expand their digital offers
- Identify and pool potential match funding to support the programme and future sustainability
- Increase the take up of online services across the borough and sustain and grow digital engagement to the benefit of all

**What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)**
**Digital Inclusion Stakeholder Group**

The programme has a governance structure based on this group. It is made up of members of various organisations across Rotherham to ensure all types of residents are represented by the programme. This is an open group and new members are always welcomed if we feel we lack representation at any time. Current organisations represented are :

RMBC (including leads from Communities and Libraries)  
 NHS  
 Rotherham AGE UK  
 RNN Group  
 Barnardos  
 VAR  
 Rotherfed

Equality and diversity is at the heart of the Digital Inclusion programme. Research suggests that digital exclusion is more prevalent amongst groups who are elderly, disabled, and from BAME and socially deprived communities.

**Phase 1 of the Digital Inclusion Programme (Knowledge Gathering) was completed in 2022.**

- An independent research specialist was appointed (Attain) to produce a Rotherham place baseline review which involved:
  - National and Rotherham population level analysis
  - Consultation with residents:
    - 454 online surveys received
    - 67 postal surveys returned (500 sent out)
    - 9 focus group sessions held across the borough in areas with high levels of deprivation and groups where English isn't the first language.

The findings of the Digital Inclusion Rotherham Place Review identified that:

- Groups most at high-risk groups of digital inclusion:
- Older People
- Deprivation
- LTC / Learning Disability
- Disadvantaged Young People

Common barriers to digital inclusion:

- Internet availability in venues such as sheltered housing.
- Language
- Residents wanting more one to one support to help them use their own devices and be more aware of internet safely.
- Age –increasing age increases the need for digital support, but there are also pockets of younger people who are at risk of being digitally excluded
- Based on the survey responses around 54% of residents need some form of digital support

**Phase 2 of the Digital Inclusion programme (Delivery) is in progress**

The Digital Inclusion working group will use the findings of Phase 1, to co-design a strategy that sets out the key areas of focus, improvement aims and objectives, delivery approach, and measurable outcomes.

The Digital Inclusion Strategy and Actin Plan were co-produced with all members of the stakeholder group and also engaging with residents of Rotherham

This strategy will underpin a place-based approach to:

1. Intervention work with high-risk groups and wards, focussing on areas of deprivation to bring communities together through activities and initiatives that enable targeted support
2. Creating the structural foundations for tackling digital inclusion at scale through partnership and collaboration; working together to resource provision and plug any gaps.

3. Establishing a social movement to drive the digital enablement of residents who want to become digitally competent, providing co-ordinated borough wide support and more bespoke offers where appropriate to specific customer groups and communities
4. Measuring impacts and outcomes using a governance framework that ensures accountability to the Rotherham Together Partnership.

The programme has been presented to The Rotherham Place Board and the Rotherham Together Partnership where on both occasions the programme was met with overwhelming support.

**Are there any gaps in the information that you are aware of?**

In terms of digital inclusion/exclusion, there is a wide range of national research but less is known (at a local level) about the impact this has on specific customer groups in the Rotherham area.

During our research phase we went into the community to meet as many people as possible. Of course, it wasn't possible to meet all people, and even though the official research phase has been completed, due to the nature of the programme we will never stop speaking to people in the community, and following a test and learn approach, ensure the help we are giving is what is needed.

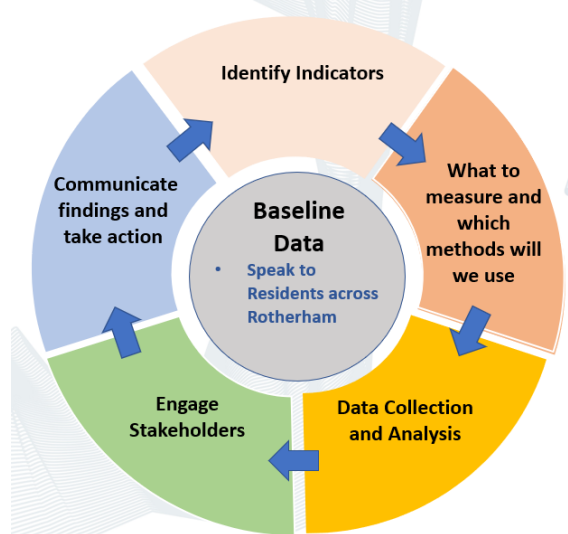
**What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics?**

The Digital Inclusion Stakeholder group will always oversee monitoring the programme.

A key part of the programme is to ensure we are constantly measuring the impact of the programme.

Our Measuring Impact strategy can be looked at with the following image :

**Stages of Measuring Impact**





The programme cannot be successful if we aren't constantly measuring our impact across all residents of Rotherham.

The Digital Inclusion programme will be recruiting 2 Digital Support Officers in the second half of 2023. They will be community-based roles, again ensuring our work is reaching all communities across Rotherham. Although based at the council, these roles are for the whole of Rotherham and can be used as a resource by organisations across Rotherham.

The Digital Inclusion Team will:

- Continue to attend Community reference group meetings and encourage feedback from members about issues/challenges for their specific communities/customer groups
- Continue to work with the stakeholder group and work with other organisations to gain their thoughts and views on the way services are delivered
- Make best use of any local or national data that highlights areas of concern, best practice elsewhere, changing behaviours, new technologies that might help specific customer groups.
- Publish Impact data / case studies to all stakeholders continuing reviewing the programme to identify any opportunities to improve
- Review this EIA on an annual basis in line with the annual review of the Customer Access Strategy

**Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)**

See Section entitled '*What equality information is available? (Include any engagement undertaken)*'

**Engagement undertaken with staff (date and group(s) consulted and key findings)**

Ongoing as part of review processes

#### 4. The Analysis - of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service (Identify by protected characteristics)

**How does the Policy/Service meet the needs of different communities and groups?** (Protected characteristics of Age, Disability, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity) - see glossary on page 14 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance)

The Digital Inclusion strategy forms the framework for the way this programme will tackle the digital divide for all communities and groups.

The strategy and action plan we coproduced with residents across Rotherham advocate the benefits of being online and it is these benefits this programme will see increase across Rotherham:

**Finding a job**

- More jobs now are only advertised online and the process to apply is often online only
- More employers require some level of digital skills

**Keeping in touch**

- Talk to friends and family through video or telephone calls, messages, or emails

**Shopping**

- It can be cheaper and more convenient to buy things online
- Find better deals for the things you need using comparison sites to find an energy supplier, mobile phone package and makes it easier to switch

**Knowledge and learning**

- The internet can help you find information, learn new skills, learn a new language, or keep up to date with news and events from around Rotherham and the world

**Health**

- Book and manage health appointments online 24/7
- View and manage your personal health information
- Improved access to health services and information

**Entertainment and lifestyle**

- Watching online TV services for your favourite box sets
- Tips and tricks for your hobbies, including finding recipes
- Buy tickets to events

**Financial**

- Online banking, apply for and access Council/Government services (including Benefits)

**Travel**

- Book holidays, check-in at the airport and get your NHS Covid Pass
- Travel around using a Sat Nav or online maps

By improving access to technology or increasing their digital skills, this programme can meet the needs of all communities and groups across Rotherham.

**Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Groups?**

Research suggests that some customers and communities are more likely to find it difficult to access services in the same way that others might take for granted. For example, national data finds that digital exclusion is more evident amongst the elderly, disabled, and individuals from BAME and socially deprived communities.

The strategy acknowledges these challenges and puts the programmes focus on these high-risk groups of digital inclusion.

**Does the Service/Policy provide any positive impact/s including improvements or remove barriers?**

The common barriers to digital inclusion:

- Internet availability in venues such as sheltered housing.
- Language
- Residents wanting more 'one to one' support to help them use their own devices and be more aware of internet safely.
- Age –increasing age increases the need for digital support, but there are also pockets of younger people who are at risk of being digitally excluded
- Based on the survey responses around 54% of residents need some form of digital support

The programmes entire focus is to remove these barriers for all residents across Rotherham and enable them to receive the benefits of being online.

The delivery phase has started and activities already underway (August 2023):

**RNN Digital Champions**

We are working with Rotherham College to utilise their digital students and their required work experience to become digital champions in the community. We are starting a small pilot. We will match suitable students with groups. This will be informal, and the idea is for them to join a group and to offer help to anybody with anything technology based. They won't be delivering courses. They will respond to whatever each individual needs help with

**Good Things Databank Pilot with the libraries**

Good Things Foundation offer free sims to organisations through their Databank programme. This is a scheme we want to promote and help organisations utilise. Working with the libraries, we will start a pilot scheme. We also want to encourage other organisations to sign up to utilise this.

**ICT Classes and Employability classes for residents**

Free training courses on specifics subjects for individuals like Excel and Word are important for individuals to upskill themselves ready for employment. These are available across Rotherham, and we will work with the deliverers to ensure what they offer is fit for purpose and to help them be advertised throughout Rotherham.

Recruitment for 2 community based Digital Support Officers has started with expected start dates of October 23

**What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations?** (may also need to consider activity which may be perceived as benefiting one group at the expense of another)

Strong and collaborative community engagement is essential in delivering this programme.

It is members of the community that this programme is designed to help.

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The strategy and action plan makes communities the heart of everything we do, in fact community members actively were involved in the develop of these documents.

This will continue throughout the programme. Its important we continually talk to the recipients of our help to ensure its the right help in the right place.

The 2 new Digital Support Officers will have a fantastic impact as they will be exclusively working in the community.

Please list any **actions and targets** that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment on the action plan below and ensure that they are added into your service plan for monitoring purposes – see page 12 of the Equality Screening and Analysis Guidance.

## **5. Summary of findings and Equality Analysis Action Plan**

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic - See page 11 of the Equality Screening and Analysis guidance

<b>Title of analysis: Digital Inclusion Equality Analysis</b>
<b>Directorate and service area: Finance &amp; Customer Services</b>
<b>Lead Manager: Helen Barker, Head of Customer Services</b>
<b>Summary of findings:</b>

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics as listed below	Target date (MM/YY)
Recruitment of 2 x Digital Support Officers	ALL	10/23
Phased rollout of National Databank across libraries of Rotherham	ALL	10/23
RNN Digital Champions in the community to start again	ALL	09/23

**\*A = Age, D= Disability, S = Sex, GR Gender Reassignment, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage. C= Carers, O= other groups**

6. Governance, ownership and approval		
Please state those that have approved the Equality Analysis. Approval should be obtained by the Director and approval sought from DLT and the relevant Cabinet Member.		
Name	Job title	Date
Helen Barker	Head of Customer Services	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2023
Phil Rushton	Customer Service Manager	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2023

7. Publishing	
The Equality Analysis will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.	
If this Equality Analysis relates to a <b>Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision</b> a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.	
A copy should also be sent to <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a> For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.	
<b>Date Equality Analysis completed</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> August 2023
<b>Report title and date</b>	Rotherham Digital Inclusion Programme Equality Analysis August 2023
<b>Date report sent for publication</b>	
<b>Date Equality Analysis sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement</b> <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a>	

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	None				
Emissions from transport?	Decrease		Increasing the dependency of more individuals to access digital technologies and go online will help reduce the need for journeys (more tasks completed online instead).		A focus of the programme is to measure the impact all its initiatives are having. We will be capturing data and case studies
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	Decrease		Expected to reduce as the Digital Inclusion Programme will encourage the recycling and donation of devices as well as encouraging repair or re-sell as opposed to upgrades.		
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	Decrease		Educating individuals in the proper usage of devices and energy consumption – efficiently charging devices, turning off devices when not in use instead of leaving on standby etc.		
Emissions from construction and/or development?	None				

Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	None				
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:					

<p>Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:</p> <p>Digital inclusion remains a challenge for some people in Rotherham and a lack of digital access can have a detrimental impact on residents. The associated problems can be significant for citizens and families contributing to educational and economic disadvantage, health inequalities and increased social isolation.</p> <p>Through our research across Rotherham, the programme has identified initiatives to help residents get access to technology and improve their digital skills. When successful, this will increase the number of people accessing services online and increase their access to knowledge online.</p> <p>The Digital Inclusion programme aims to encourage individuals to reduce their digital carbon footprint by managing electronic devices properly and more efficiently.</p> <p>It will also encourage targeted groups to have greater dependency on digital technologies which can hopefully alter their day to day activities – for example an increase in online banking, online shopping, e-books, streaming etc will mean fewer journeys and healthier environments.</p> <p>To ensure the programme is being successful, a key component is to monitor the impact we are having by collecting data and case studies at every stage which will hopefully allow to confirm we are having a positive impact which, explained above can include carbon emission reduction.</p>
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Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Paul Woodhouse (14.08.23) Digital Inclusion Delivery Manager, Customer Services
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	Tracking Reference: CIA 131 Arthur King, Principal Climate Change Officer Regeneration & Environment



**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 18 September 2023

**Report Title**

July Financial Monitoring 2023/24

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Judith Badger, Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services

**Report Author(s)**

Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services  
01709 254518 or rob.mahon@rotherham.gov.uk

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The report sets out the financial position as at the end of July 2023 and forecast for the remainder of the financial year, based on actual costs and income for the first four months of 2023/24. Financial performance is a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance framework and is essential to achievement of the objectives within the Council's policy agenda. To that end, this is the second financial monitoring report of a series of reports for the current financial year which will continue to be brought forward to Cabinet on a regular basis.

As at July 2023, the Council currently estimates an overspend of £4.5m for the financial year 2023/24. This is largely due to demand led pressures on Children's residential placements and home to school transport as well as the impact of inflationary pressures in the economy, particularly on food prices, and the legacy impact of lockdown restrictions on some directorate's services, especially in R&E.

The current economic climate remains turbulent, with challenges in projecting where inflation will move and the pace at which it moves. At present inflation is showing signs of slowing owing to reductions in energy and fuel prices. This will help support the Council's Budget position for 2022/23, though it is too early in the financial year to be clear on its full benefit.

There remains funding uncertainty for the local government sector beyond 2023/24 as the Local Government financial settlement was only a one-year allocation and the

Council will continue to face significant challenges moving forwards in regards to the funding of social care.

Although inflation appears to be easing, the Local Government Association (LGA) Pay Award is yet to be agreed and the full financial impact remains unknown at the present time. The next report to Cabinet in November may present a more certain picture of the Council's Directorate financial position and the impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy if this is resolved.

### **Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Note the current General Fund Revenue Budget forecast overspend of £4.5m.
2. Note that actions will continue to be taken to reduce the overspend position but that it is possible that the Council will need to draw on its reserves to balance the 2023/24 financial position.
3. That Cabinet approve the capital budget variations as detailed in section 2.61 of the report.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 Carbon Impact Assessment

### **Background Papers**

Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 Report to Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

May Financial Monitoring 2023-24 Report to Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023

### **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

No

### **Council Approval Required**

No

### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## July Financial Monitoring 2023/24

### 1. Background

- 1.1** As part of its performance and control framework the Council is required to produce regular and timely reports for the Strategic Leadership Team and Cabinet to keep them informed of financial performance so that, where necessary, actions can be agreed and implemented to bring expenditure in line with the approved budget for the financial year.
- 1.2** Delivery of the Council's Revenue Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Programme within the parameters agreed by Council is essential if the Council's objectives are to be achieved. Financial performance is a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance framework.
- 1.3** This report is the second in a series of financial monitoring reports to Cabinet for 2023/24, setting out the projected year end revenue budget financial position in light of actual costs and income for the first four months of the financial year.

### 2. Key Issues

- 2.1** Table 1 below shows, by directorate, the summary forecast revenue outturn position.

**Table 1: Forecast Revenue Outturn 2023/24 as at July 2023**

Directorate	Budget 2023/24	Forecast Outturn 2023/24	Forecast Variance over/under (-)
	£m	£m	£m
<b>Children and Young People's Services</b>	65.4	70.2	4.8
<b>Adult Care, Housing &amp; Public Health</b>	120.0	120.0	0.0
<b>Regeneration and Environment Services</b>	49.3	54.2	4.9
<b>Finance and Customer Services</b>	20.8	20.8	0.0
<b>Assistant Chief Executive</b>	7.4	7.2	-0.2
<b>Central Services</b>	39.3	34.3	-5.0
<b>Directorate Forecast Outturn</b>	<b>302.2</b>	<b>306.7</b>	<b>4.5</b>
<b>Dedicated Schools Grant</b>			-4.2
<b>Housing Revenue Account (HRA)</b>			-4.7

**2.2** The Council's overspend position at this point is largely due to the following overall issues:

- Placement pressures within Children and Young People's Services and Adults Social Care.
- Home to School Transport pressures within Regeneration and Environment and Children and Young People's Services.
- Pressures relating to the longer term recovery from Covid-19, on income generation within Regeneration and Environment.
- Inflationary costs impacting the cost of food in Schools Catering and contractual and provider inflation impacting Children and Young People's Services.
- Increased costs of homelessness due to increased demand.
- Increased property costs within Regeneration and Environment.

**2.3** As at July 2023, the Council currently estimates a directorate overspend of £4.5m for the financial year 2023/24. Whilst the core directorates services have a forecast year end overspend of £9.5m on the General Fund, there is a £5m forecast underspend within Central Services reflecting the corporate budget provision approved within the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 to support anticipated pressures within Home to School Transport and Children's placements.

**2.4** However, there are expected to be pressures within Central Services as a result of inflation remaining high and the potential Local Government Association (LGA) Pay Award. This pressure is expected to be mitigated through the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy which did have reasonable cover for inflationary impacts. The Council's current forecast assumes an increase in pay award based on the LGA pay offer. This is above the position built into the Council's Budget for 2023/24 and could increase further following national pay negotiations.

**2.5** It is currently expected that the period of high inflation will last for a further 12-18 months before returning to a more normal level but the cost increases being experienced will raise the base cost of services on which future inflation is applied meaning a compounding impact. As such, the Council will face short term financial pressures that will need to be managed and mitigated through the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council's reserves.

**2.6** The forecast position will continue to be monitored closely and mitigations identified to improve the position, though it is possible that the Council will need to call on reserves to achieve a balanced outturn. There remains significant volatility at present in the economy that makes projecting forwards the impact of inflation challenging, as such the Council will need to keep focus on assumptions based on these pressures. In addition, the Council will need to ensure that mitigating actions are taken to reduce the current directorate forecast outturns along with ensuring that savings plans are delivered on time to mitigate any knock on impact on future years Medium Term Financial Planning.

- 2.7** The Council is able to report secured delivery of £1.618m against the planned savings for 2023/24. Table 2 below provides an update on the remainder of the £11.5m of planned savings that had been re-profiled for delivery over the medium term, £4.4m of which were delivered during 2022/23. During 2022/23 the Council successfully delivered £4.9m savings, £4.4m on a permanent basis. As such £7.1m remains to be delivered across 2023/24 and 2024/25, with £4.4m to be delivered by the end of 2023/24 and the full £7.1m by the end of 2024/25. To date £1.618m has been secured at the end of July from savings in CYPS placements and management costs and R&E operational property budgets. Whilst placement costs have been reduced in CYPS demand has increased as such CYPS is still reporting a pressure on placements. Further detail is provided in the Directorate position narrative.

**Table 2: Previously agreed savings**

Saving	To be delivered by end of 2023/24	Total to be delivered end of 2024/25	Secured as at 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2023
	£000	£000	£000
<b>CYPS</b>	3713	6,385	1,594
<b>R&amp;E</b>	388	410	24
<b>R&amp;E Customer &amp; Digital</b>	300	300	0
<b>Total Savings</b>	<b>4,401</b>	<b>7,095</b>	<b>1,618</b>

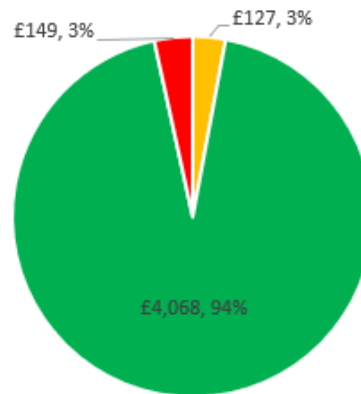
- 2.8** As part of the Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 a series of new temporary and permanent savings were approved. Table 3 shows the progress against these new savings, these include a range of permanent and temporary savings with a total of £2.789m secured against 2023/24 total of £4.344m so far.

**Table 3: New Savings agreed as part of the Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 report**

Directorate	2023/24	2024/25	Secured as at 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2023
Finance and Customer Services	308	238	310
Assistant Chief Executive	303	407	96
Children's and Young Peoples Services	1,348	1,059	1,348
Adult Care, Housing and Public Health	1,224	1,998	235
Regeneration and Environment	1,161	1,001	800
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,344</b>	<b>4,703</b>	<b>2,789</b>

**2.9** A summary of these new savings RAG status is shown below.

Total Savings RAG Values (£000s)



- 2.10** £149k of savings plans are deemed high risk. This is in respect of ACH&PH3 Housing Related Support. The proposed timescales for making the savings relating to Burns and Browning, whilst legally achievable, did not anticipate the current lack of options to place existing clients in alternative provision. The subsequent review has highlighted that other HRS providers have become deskilled at supporting this cohort of vulnerable adults.
- 2.11** This saving should be achievable longer term when the new mental health service options are fully in place and the flexible purchasing system for Housing Related Support (HRS) is completed. A Cabinet report on progress is scheduled for June 2024 which will include timescales and recommendations for the future of these two facilities. The Cabinet report will explore opportunities for any efficiencies that can be made from the HRS service at that time. It is expected that in the meantime this saving will be mitigated via additional NHS income in Adult Social Care on a temporary basis until clarity over the longer term deliverability of the Housing Related Support is confirmed. Following confirmation, the revised approach will be reported to Cabinet to approve as an amendment to the savings plan.
- 2.12** The Amber savings include FCS2 ICT Contracts (£70k budget) and ACEX6 UKSPF grant income (£57k budget). Against FCS2 £36k has been delivered to date, although it is expected the remainder will be delivered during the year, it cannot be confirmed until new contract values are agreed as the Council continues to refresh/renew its ICT contracts. There is a risk to delivery as values are subject to procurement. ACEX6 is anticipated to be delivered via alternative grant funding stream to UKSPF. When grant funding is confirmed this saving will be adjusted to green.

The following sections provide further information regarding the Council's forecast outturn of £4.5m, the key reasons for forecast under or overspend within directorates and the progress of savings delivery.

**2.13 Children and Young People Services Directorate (£4.8m) forecast overspend)**

**2.14** Children & Young People Services has a budget pressure of £4.8m at the end of July, a £1.5m worse position than the £3.3m overspend reported in May. This is primarily driven by pressures in Children's Social Care and Education. In the main the overall pressures in Children's Social Care relate to demands on placements (£3.8m) and home to school transport cost pressures (£1.3m), offset by staff savings of £300k.

**2.15** The Looked After Children placement numbers at the end of July 2023 are 518. This is 28 below the July 2023 budget profile (546).

**2.16** However, the placement mix is showing higher than projected placements at July in external residential (9), Remand (2), Parent & baby (2), external emergency (2) offset by in-house fostering (21), IFA (10), Supported Accommodation (4), and in house residential (3) and in house emergency (1), no cost placement (5).

**2.17** The LAC number of 518 includes 40 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children which has risen from 14 in March 2022.

**2.18** The direct employee budget is £41.3m and is a combination of general fund, traded and grant funded services. The forecast underspend at the end of the July 2023 financial year is £300k, which includes a general fund staffing underspend of £300k after removing placement related staffing costs.

**2.19** A significant element of the CYPs non-pay budgets relates to placements which has a net budget of £34.4m with an outturn projected spend of £38.2m and a projected overspend of £3.8m. The £3.8m adverse projection relates in the main to a £3.3m pressure in relation to residential placements.

**2.20** The £3.3m residential pressures is due to a combination of a reduction in the estimated residential step downs (£3.4m) as well as increase in the unit costs (£200k) due to market pressures, offset by increased DSG funding (£300k) where young people are educated by the childrens home.

**2.21** The Home to School transport pressures of £1.3m reflect demands on transporting children in care (£450k), those children in care placed out of borough with EHC plans £400k and post 19 transport costs £450k. CYPs have operational groups set up to review transport costs to ensure the most appropriate method of transport is in place.

## **2.22 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)**

The High Needs Block (HNB) is £57.8m (including the £3.5m transfer from the schools block) and demand remains high due to rising numbers of children supported in specialist provision and the rising costs of Education Health Care (EHC) plans. The High Needs Budget is based on the DSG recovery plan and includes anticipated growth of EHCs numbers and the implementation of new developments linked to the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.

**2.23** The central DSG reserve now stands at £5.927m deficit following receipt of £6.0m safety valve funding during 2022/23 and a £913k underspend across all DSG elements. The Council will receive further payments to fully remove the DSG reserve along with additional capital funding to ensure the Council is placed in a more sustainable position moving forwards.

**2.24** The High Needs Block (HNB) budget is set to provide a £2.068m contribution to reserves in line with the management plan, but only after agreement of the 1.5% School Block funding transfer (£3.459m) and would have been a £1.391m in-year deficit without this funding.

**2.25** The position at the end of July is a £1.517m overspend on the High Needs Block and therefore the contribution to reserves would reduce from £2.068m to £551k. The Central DSG is forecast to underspend by £1.751m in 2023/24 when taking into account the underspend on the HNB (£551k), Safety Valve funding (£2.0m), offset by planned use of reserves in Early Years and Schools Block (£800k). The DSG reserve deficit is expected to reduce to £4.176m by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024.

**2.26** The key areas of focus to reduce High Needs Block spend are:

- A review of high cost, external education provision to reduce spend and move children back into Rotherham educational provision.
- Increase SEN resource provision in Rotherham linked to mainstream schools and academies, with further capacity becoming operational by the end of 2023/24.
- Implement the accessibility strategy.
- Work with schools and academies to maintain pupils in mainstream settings wherever possible.

## **2.27 Adult Care, Housing and Public Health (balanced outturn position)**

**2.28** The overall directorate forecast is currently breakeven. However, there is significant demand pressures within Adults (£1.1m) and Homelessness (£864k). It is currently expected that these pressures can be mitigated across the financial year as has been the case in previous years. This will be closely monitored over the period.

**2.29** The cost of care packages is forecast to be £1.1m overspent. This is due to increased numbers of people in older people's residential and nursing care and in mental health provision. This includes some high-cost packages. The forecast assumes all current placements remain for the rest of the year although they may



reduce. Overall movements in numbers will be closely monitored as the year progresses and additional income from CHC may offset some of the costs. Transitions are forecast as underspent by £313k reflecting historic trends.

- 2.30** Staffing budgets are forecast to be £384k overspent due to vacancies which have needed to be filled by agency placements that provide cover for the service and overtime payments for staff.
- 2.31** Neighbourhood Services (Housing) is forecast to overspend by £881k. Homelessness is expected to overspend by £864k after accounting for grant income. This is due to continued use of hotels as numbers of people seeking support continues to increase. In July there were 61 households needing hotel accommodation. This is an increase from 35 in April. The forecast assumes that numbers will decrease steadily over the year.
- 2.32** Public Health is forecast to budget at this stage.
- 2.33 Regeneration and Environment Directorate (£4.9m forecast overspend)**
- 2.34** The July outturn projection for the directorate indicates a forecast pressure of £4.9m for this financial year. This represents a significant worsening of £1.0m from the May forecast. The forecast reflects the impact of ongoing demographic pressures in Home to School Transport, the impact of inflationary pressures in the economy, particularly on food prices, rising property costs in Asset Management and the legacy impact of lockdown restrictions on some of the directorate's services. For example, the impact on waste tonnages resulting from changes in patterns of work life balance, and the impact on income generation, in particular, in Parking Services. The forecast outturn projection includes the following specific budget issues.
- 2.35** Community Safety and Street Scene (CSS) is forecasting an overall pressure of £1.9m, a decrease of £0.3m from May's reported position. The most significant pressure continues to be in respect of Home to School Transport of £2.0m, due to ongoing demographic pressures leading to an increase in the number of new eligible passengers and fewer contractors in the market leading to increased prices. To address the increased costs and demand a range of solutions are being explored to influence demand and maximise savings opportunities, using improved cost data analysis to support plans to implement lower cost routes.
- 2.36** Parking Services is forecasting a pressure of £340k. The longer term recovery post pandemic, the ongoing economic impact on town centre footfall and the closure of the Forge Island car park for the cinema development, has led to a reduction in income from parking charges. The pressure in Parking Services is being mitigated by income over-recovery of £470k in Streetworks and Enforcement.
- 2.37** Waste Management is currently forecasting a £530k underspend, an improvement from the break-even position last reported. There has been a slight worsening in recycling market prices, and an increase in agency costs adding to collection costs, as a result of staff absence but pressures in the service are being

mitigated by the windfall payment from the Waste PFI contract, as a result of the high energy price which is overachieving against budget.

- 2.38** Culture Sport and Tourism (CST) is forecasting an overall pressure of £400k, an increase of £300k from May's forecast. There is a £160k pressure in Green Spaces as a result of income pressures and staffing pressures in the Trees and Woodland Service, resulting from the requirement to increase resources in the Service to deal with a backlog of maintenance issues. There is an ongoing pressure in the Theatre of £60k as a result of a forecast under-recovery of income. There is also a forecast overspend of £90k at the Waleswood Caravan Park as a result of flooding in April that impacted on pitch availability, poor weather during the summer impacting on income generation, and an increase in food costs. The Music Service is reporting an £80k pressure as a result of staffing pressures, due to teachers pay increases and changes to contractual arrangements.
- 2.39** Planning, Regeneration and Transport (PRT) is forecasting an overall pressure of £2.3m, an increase of £0.7m from May's forecast. The major pressure is in School Meals of £1.5m, due to inflationary pressures on food prices and pressures on income in the service.
- 2.40** Asset Management is forecasting an overspend of £870k. The forecast reflects an increase of £330k in cleaning charges, to reflect the true service cost. There is a corresponding increase in income in the Cleaning Service. The forecast assumes income under recovery in Estates, as a result of staff vacancies impacting on income generation. Pressures in Facilities Management include rising property costs, including repairs and maintenance and fixtures and fittings. The timing of the achievement of property savings is under regular review and will be fed into future forecasts as key decisions are able to be taken.
- 2.41** A pressure of £200k is being reported in the RIDO service, largely due to a forecast shortfall on Markets income arising from the number of void stalls and the ongoing difficult trading conditions. However, grant income offsetting direct costs in other services in RIDO has helped to partially mitigate the Markets service pressure.
- 2.42 Finance and Customer Services (balanced outturn position)**
- 2.43** The overall directorate is reporting a balanced outturn position. Whilst there are some financial pressures within the directorate, the service is projected to make savings on Legal disbursements and Bereavement Services income, which will help to mitigate these financial pressures and deliver a balanced budget.
- 2.44** Within Customer, Information and Digital Services, the service continues to generate cost reductions on the renewal or removal of ICT contracts, which has delivered a budget saving this year. The service has also incurred difficulties with recruitment, creating further temporary cost reduction. This is offset by over-recruitment within Customer Services contact centre to help manage the difficulties caused by high staff turnover in this area, that impacts on call waiting times. This is intended to be managed from underspends elsewhere within the Directorate.

- 2.45** Legal Services faces continued demand for legal support with child protection hearings and court case costs relating to Looked After Children. Reduced costs of legal disbursements and ongoing difficulties in recruiting to key posts, in particular within Adult Social Care legal support, are currently resulting in a forecast underspend. However, the number of cases during the year remains volatile and will continue to be monitored closely.
- 2.46 Assistant Chief Executive (£0.2m underspend)**
- 2.47** The service is currently forecasting an underspend of £200k. This is due to increased income in HR of £102k (offset by increased costs of DBS checks) and additional funding in support of resettlement work. Staffing is also forecast to be underspent due to a small number of vacancies across the directorate.
- 2.48 Central Services (£5m forecast underspend)**
- 2.49** Central Services has a forecast underspend of £5m reflecting the corporate budget provision approved within the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 to support anticipated pressures within Home to School Transport and Children's placements.
- 2.50** There continues to be significant financial challenges as a result of high inflation, energy prices and the potential impact of the 2023/24 Local Government Pay Award. Whilst energy prices are expected to continue to reduce they remain well in excess of levels prior to the war in Ukraine. Inflation continues to impact the renewal of Council contracts and payments to key service providers, as such it continues to present a financial challenge to the Council's approved Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy. However, the Council was able to build into the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 greater levels of funding to manage the impact of inflation, energy and pay. As such it is currently anticipated that these impacts can be controlled within the existing budgetary provision. As stated within the Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 uncertainty in the global and UK economy remains the most significant budget risk and as such will need to continue to be closely monitored.
- 2.51** The current economic climate remains turbulent, with challenges in projecting where inflation will move and the pace at which it moves. At present inflation is showing signs of slowing owing to reductions in energy and fuel prices. This will help support the Council's Budget position for 2022/23, though it is too early in the financial year to be clear on its full benefit. These financial challenges are being regularly reviewed as part of the Council's ongoing Medium Term Financial Planning. It is currently expected that the period of high inflation will last for around for 12-18 months before returning to a more normal level. As such, the Council will face short term financial pressures that will need to be managed and mitigated through the Medium Term Financial Strategy and where required the Council's reserves. As such the Council's ability to build further capacity into those reserves as part of the 2022/23 outturn position is a significant benefit.

**2.52** The Council's Treasury Management functions are expected to continue to perform well for the bulk of 2023/24. The Council still holds significant cash balances and is able to invest them for a greater return given current high interest rates, in addition to slippage on the Capital programme in 2022/23 which means that the level of financing costs for 2022/23 will be less than anticipated. The benefits from the Treasury Management function can be used to support wider inflationary pressures that the Council will face during 2023/24. The positive impact of this will be reported later in the year when the value of this is more secure.

**2.53** The Central Services budgets are made up of a number of corporate budgets for levies and charges such as the Integrated Transport Levy (ITA), PFI Financing, and Treasury Management. A list of the main budget areas within Central Services was provided as part of the Council's Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24, approved at Council 1 March 2023. The costs within this area are largely fixed costs, set out prior to the start of a financial year, not specific to a particular Directorate and are therefore not controllable by the directorates and thus held centrally. For example, the cost of levies for 2023/24 was set at £13.2m at the outset of 2023/24.

#### **2.54 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

**2.55** The Housing Revenue Account is a statutory ring-fenced account that the Council has to maintain in respect of the income and expenditure incurred in relation to its council dwellings and associated assets. The HRA is currently forecast to underspend by £4,729k.

**2.56** The underspend largely relates to reduced energy costs for the Council and the District Heating scheme £2,976k and £1,512k in contract shared savings.

**2.57** Increases in energy costs were anticipated to have a big impact in this financial year. These have now decreased significantly. This saving has now been recognised in the forecast as Council has approved the proposed redistribution of the saving.

**2.58** Contract shared savings is a refund from repairs contractors based on the profits they made during the previous year once those have been confirmed and audited.

The income is expected to be ringfenced to cover expected costs associated with:

- bringing stock conditions surveys up to date;
- improving systems and processes for providing assurance on property services compliance;
- preparing for new regulatory framework and inspection regime;
- and expanding our housing growth function to achieve the Council's 1,000 new homes target.

## 2.59 Capital Programme Update

**2.60** The Capital Programme 2023/24 has been updated following the 2022/23 outturn and the latest information on project position and delivery plans. The revised Capital Programme is £249.767m split between the General Fund £198.322m and HRA £51.445m. This is a decrease of £16.994m from the position reported to Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023 as part of the Council's 2022/23 Financial Outturn report, the majority of which relates to the reprofiling of schemes due to delays caused by the high volume of capital activity taking place nationally that is limiting resources in the market and the challenges that inflation is causing on the cost of projects that ultimately requires greater work on project design and scope. The movement is based on the latest profiles of expenditure against schemes, including slippage and re-profiles of -£16.376m and new grant funding added to the programme of £2.793m.

## 2.61 Table 3: Variations to the Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2025/26.

	<b>Total Impact £m</b>	<b>2023/24 Impact £m</b>	<b>Post 2023/24 Impact £m</b>
Revised Grant and Funding Estimates	23.641	2.793	20.848
Changes to Corporate Resources	-6.244	0	-6.244
Slippage / reprofiling	-0.694	-16.376	15.682
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.703</b>	<b>-13.583</b>	<b>30.286</b>

**2.62** The main items contributing to the reprofiling of the Capital Programme are:

- **Riverside Gardens**, £2.202m slippage. Following the outcome of the procurement exercise the project is undergoing a value engineering exercise and a subsequent procurement for the revised scheme. This will result in an expected delay of approximately 6 months.
- **Essoldo** £1.488m slippage. This scheme was forecast to be over budget. The cost plan is being reviewed to try to find savings. This has delayed the scheme whilst the building owner and potential operator review proposals.
- **Templeborough**, £2.365m slippage. There have been revisions to the delivery plan, costs and design which have delayed the project by approximately 3 months.
- **Leisure & Culture Qtr Infrastructure**, £1.817m slippage. Budget issues are causing a delay to the start of the project. The scheme design is being reviewed and procurement will be aligned to the Riverside Gardens scheme.

- **Riverside Infrastructure**, £1.089m slippage. The project has been rescope in order to remove the bridge that would have joined to the Guest & Chrimes site which has delayed the start of the scheme.
- **Rother Valley Country Park**, £3.128m slippage. In light of additional a refresh and review of the project scope and outputs a revised funding package has been required. This has resulted in a delay to the scheme.
- **Sheffield Rd, Phase 2 & 3** £2.385m slippage. This budget has been reprofiled to tie into anticipated phasing of a 15 month delivery programme.

**2.63** New grant funded schemes are added to the Capital Programme on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules. Grant schemes added or reduced since the July Cabinet report are listed below:

**Table 4: New Grant/HRA Funded Schemes added to the programme**

Directorate/Scheme	2023/24 £M	Post 2023/24 £m
<b>Regeneration &amp; Environment</b>		
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Funding.	0.500	0.790
Dept for Transport Clean Air Zone (CAZ) funding	0.081	0.000
Building Back Better Funding for Electric Vehicle infrastructure	0.123	0.000
City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) Highways Maintenance Funding confirmed	0.825	0.000
CRSTS Grant for Mainline Station	1.000	0.000
Building Back Better Funding (Templeborough)	0.270	0.000
DLUHC Regeneration Grant (Wath & Dinnington)	0.000	19.990
Future High St Funding	0.141	0.000
Local Neighbourhoods Roads Safety Budget Allocations updated following year end	-0.145	-0.057
Transforming Cities Fund (Maltby Bus Corridor)	0.117	0.000
Adjustments to Levelling up Funding	-0.118	0.125
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.793</b>	<b>20.848</b>

## 2.64 Corporate Borrowing Changes

The Capital Programme includes provision for the purchase of the Council's Office 365 and telephony licenses. There is the option to pay for licences annually and as such avoid the cost of borrowing associated with paying upfront for a number of years. Moving these costs to revenue is operationally and financially more effective and will generate a saving of £57k per annum at a borrowing rate of 3%.

**2.65** To process this change the capital budget of £6.406m has been removed and a revenue budget will be set up within central services. The budget will be created by removing the cost of financing from the Treasury Management Budget.

**2.66** There is also a budget addition of £162k for the demolition of Park Hill Lodge. Park Hill Lodge in Maltby is a General Fund asset proposed for development through the HRA for new Council homes. To facilitate this, and to mitigate against the revenue holding costs, it is proposed to use non-ringfenced Right to Buy receipts to fund the demolition.

## 2.67 Programme Variations

The following variations to the Capital Programme cover significant variations between capital projects that are either key decision value or a change in use of corporate resources and as such need reporting to Cabinet.

- Rother Valley and Thrybergh Country Park:** An exercise has been undertaken to finalise the outputs for these two projects and as a result establish a funding package to deliver the two schemes. The outcome of this was reported to August Cabinet. Following this review a funding package has been approved to bridge the gap, this revised funding pack has now been factored into the Council's Capital Programme. This includes;

	<b>Rother Valley (£M)</b>	<b>Thrybergh (£M)</b>
Levelling Up Fund	5.500	2.500
CST Capital Contribution	0.08	0.064
Capital Contingency	0.374	0.271
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.954</b>	<b>2.835</b>

- Templeborough Business Zone:** This Town Deal funded project facilitates the development of a new 'heart' of Templeborough situated at the gateway between Sheffield and Rotherham at the Magna Science Adventure Centre. New managed workspace units will be delivered, set within improved green space and complemented by drive up food and beverage.

This is a complex site to develop with several constraints resulting from its historic use requiring evolution and adaptation of design solutions as further knowledge of the site is gained through the project development

process. Scheme design has also had to respond nationwide cost increases and pressures in the construction market.

### Cost variation

Cost at stage 2 was reported to be estimated at £648k over budget. A cost reduction exercise was undertaken, the main changes summarised below:

- Replace a new office build with improvement of an existing office building.
- Removal of one managed workspace unit and an increase in the size of the food and beverage unit.
- Design amendments to the specification for car park improvements.
- Increase in fees due to extended design period to complete scheme changes.
- Reduction in programme length resulting in savings on prelim costs.

The design and cost review has resulted in a reduction in the project cost increase to £270k over budget.

The revised funding package includes:-

	£M
Town Deal Enabling Fund	0.038
Town Deal	6.570
MCA Devolved Capital	0.270
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.878</b>

## 2.68 MCA Approvals

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) acts as accountable body for a number of different Government funding streams and as the accountable body for Gainshare. New funding received through SYMCA is £81k CAZ funding, £825k CRSTS maintenance funding, £1m CRSTS funding for the mainline station, £393k building back better funding, £117k transforming cities funding.

## 2.69 The proposed updated Capital Programme to 2025/26 is shown by directorate in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Proposed Updated Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27**

Directorate	2023/24 Budget £m	2024/25 Budget £m	2025/26 Budget £m	Total Budget £m
<b>General Fund Capital</b>				
Children and Young People's Services	12.887	7.476	11.733	<b>32.096</b>
Regeneration and Environment	169.281	60.939	37.984	<b>268.204</b>
Adult Care & Housing	9.008	14.117	4.273	<b>27.399</b>



Assistant Chief Executive	0.405	0.210	0.210	<b>0.825</b>
Finance and Customer Services	6.740	3.380	16.216	<b>26.335</b>
<b>Total General Fund Capital</b>	<b>198.322</b>	<b>86.123</b>	<b>70.415</b>	<b>354.859</b>
<b>Total HRA Capital</b>	51.445	56.283	31.450	<b>139.178</b>
<b>Total RMBC Capital Programme</b>	<b>249.767</b>	<b>142.406</b>	<b>101.865</b>	<b>494.038</b>

The Capital Programme for 2023/24 remains ambitious even with a significant level of re-profiling of schemes into 2024/25. The Council will therefore need to keep close control of project spend profiles and delivery milestones to keep these projects on track. The Council will also need to review the deliverability of this significantly increased capital programme and potentially, re-profile some schemes into future financial years.

## 2.70 Funding Position of Capital Programme 2023/24

The £249.767m of capital expenditure is funded as shown in the Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Funding of the Approved Capital Programme**

<b>Funding Stream</b>	<b>2023/24 Budget £m</b>
Grants and Contributions	79.366
Unsupported Borrowing	118.087
Capital Receipts	0.738
HRA Contribution	0.130
<b>Total Funding - General Fund</b>	<b>198.322</b>
Grants and Contributions	2.516
Unsupported Borrowing	1.602
Housing Major Repairs Allowance	38.168
Capital Receipts	7.243
Revenue Contribution	1.915
<b>Total Funding - HRA</b>	<b>51.445</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>249.767</b>

## 2.71 Capital Receipts

**2.72** The Council is continuing to undertake a comprehensive review of its assets and buildings portfolio with the aim of rationalising both its operational and non-

operational asset holdings. This may contribute future capital receipts which are earmarked to support the revenue budget, in accordance with the Council's approved flexible use of capital receipts strategy.

- 2.73** To date General Fund useable capital receipts of £1.290m have been generated. Although loan repayments will be received during the financial year, these cannot be used to support the revenue budget as only those receipts by the disposal of property, plant and equipment can be used in that way.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Total as at 31st July 2023 £m</b>
Land at Kiveton Park	-1.236
Miscellaneous	-0.039
<b>Total Capital Receipts (Excluding loan repayments)</b>	<b>-1.275</b>
Repayment of Loans	-0.015
<b>Total Capital Receipts</b>	<b>-1.290</b>

- 2.74** The detailed disposal programme is currently being updated. At this stage the forecast for useable capital receipts is between £1.275m and £1.75m but this may change when the detailed assessment has been completed. These receipts are made up of a small number of disposals and therefore any changes to these could impact on these forecasts significantly. It should be noted that there is no corporate requirement to disposal of General Fund assets and each individual decision should be taken as appropriate.

## **2.75 Capital Achievements**

The following outputs have been achieved during the 2023/24 financial year to date.

- In the first quarter of 23-24 the council has completed the repair of 32 unclassified roads out of the 159 unclassified roads included in the indicative highways repair programme for 2023/24.
- In the initial Towns and Villages programme, eight schemes are now complete with a further scheme currently being delivered, and three projects issued to delivery teams ready for completion. The programme has been split into four phases, with five of the six projects in Phase 1 now completed, as well as three projects in Phase 2. The remaining project in Phase 1 is awaiting approvals from third parties through Legal Services.
- Continued progress on 'Shovel Ready' flood defence/mitigation schemes and complete Stage 2 (initial design work and engagement with third

parties) - Phase 2A (Ickles Lock) is now completed and a completion ceremony took place in July 23.

- Progress on the 6 priority Flood Alleviation Schemes is moving through the identified delivery stages of feasibility, site investigations, land owner engagement, detailed design and planning applications approvals ahead of the 2024 deadline.
- Manvers Way Cycle Scheme completed in July. This provides an attractive high quality and direct cycle route between Wath Upon Dearne Town Centre, residential areas and employment areas. This supports economic growth in the Dearne Valley and contributes towards reducing congestion and improving air quality.
- The new pedestrian bridge at Forge Island has been lifted into place linking Forge Island to the town centre.

### **3.0 Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1** With regard to the current forecast net revenue budget the directorates are forecasting an overspend of £4.5m, management actions are being identified with the clear aim of ensuring a balanced budget position can be achieved. It is currently assumed that to achieve a balanced outturn position there will be a need to utilise an element of the Council's reserves given the significant pressures that have come to light since the Council set it's 2023/24 budget. This is in recognition that there are still financial implications that need to be fully understood and that may not be fully known until later in the financial year. It is nationally recognised best practice to monitor the performance against the agreed revenue budgets and the Capital Programme throughout the year.

### **4.0 Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1** The Council consulted on the proposed budget for 2023/24, as part of producing the Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24. Details of the consultation are set out in the Budget and Council Tax 2023/24 report approved by Council on 2nd March 2023.

### **5.0 Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1** Strategic Directors, Managers and Budget Holders will ensure ongoing tight management and close scrutiny of spend this financial year.
- 5.2** Financial Monitoring reports are taken to Cabinet meetings during the year. The Financial Outturn report for 2023/24 will be taken to Cabinet in July 2024.

### **6.0 Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1** The Council's overspend position is detailed within the report along with the estimated impact of current financial pressures from inflation and increases in demand. This position continues to be monitored closely. Control over spending

remains critical to both maintaining the robust Reserves Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**6.2** An update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy will be provided to Cabinet later in 2023. This will provide a more detailed update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Planning factoring in the impact of the current year financial pressures and the longer term impacts on the MTFS and reserves strategy.

**6.3** There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. Project specific implications have been addressed in the Key Issues section.

## **7.0 Legal Advice and Implications**

**7.1** No direct legal implications.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

**8.1** No direct implications.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

**9.1** The report includes reference to the cost pressures on both Children's and Adult Social care budget.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

**10.1** This is a finance update report, providing a review of current progress to date on the Council's revenue and capital budgets, any equalities and human rights impacts from service delivery have been or will be detailed as service budgets, capital projects are pulled together for inclusion within the Council's revenue budget or capital programme.

## **11 Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

**11.1** No direct implications.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

**12.1** At a time of economic difficulty and tight financial constraints, managing spend in line with the Council's budget is paramount. Careful scrutiny of expenditure and income across all services and close budget monitoring therefore remain a top priority if the Council is to deliver both its annual and medium term financial plans while sustaining its overall financial resilience.

## **13. Accountable Officers**

Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	04/09/2023
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	29/08/2023
Head of Legal Services (Deputy Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	29/08/2023

*Report Author:* Rob Mahon, Assistant Director – Financial Services  
This report is published on the Council's [website](#).

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## Initial Equality Screening Assessment (Part A)

As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality and diversity.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provide a record of both the process and decision. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions.

Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality and diversity
- whether or not equality and diversity is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an equality analysis.

<b>Directorate: Finance and Customer Services</b>	<b>Service area: Finance</b>
<b>Lead person: Rob Mahon</b>	<b>Contact number: 01709 254518</b>

### 1. Title: July Financial Monitoring 2023/24

Is this a:

☐

**Strategy / Policy**

☒

**Service / Function**

☐

**Other**

**If other, please specify**

### 2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

The Council has a framework of budgetary monitoring and reporting that ensures budget management is exercised within annual cash limits.

Each month the Budget Manager receives timely information on income and expenditure to enable them to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities. Following the review of the budget information, each budget manager provides a forecast of their projected outturn position on each service. The Strategic Director subsequently provides a consolidated forecast for their directorate to the Chief Finance Officer and relevant Cabinet Member.

A budget monitoring report, which includes an up-to-date outturn forecast, information about significant variances from approved budgets and proposals for dealing with them, is submitted to Cabinet at least 6 times a year, culminating with

## Appendix 1

the Council's Financial Outturn report.

Whilst the framework described above relates to revenue budgets, the capital programme is also similarly monitored and reported alongside the Council's revenue position.

The financial monitoring position report summarises the key variances for each directorate and considers the key financial pressures and risks. The report also covers off any other key items to be noted at the time.

Given that the revenue and capital budgets have been approved by Council in February each year, when equality assessments would have been considered at that time in respect of the budget proposals, there are no further issues in respect of equality and diversity.

### 3. Relevance to equality and diversity

All the Council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community – borough wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality and diversity.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Could the proposal have implications regarding the accessibility of services to the whole or wider community?		x
Could the proposal affect service users?		x
Has there been or is there likely to be an impact on an individual or group with protected characteristics?		x
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns regarding the proposal?		x
Could the proposal affect how the Council's services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?		x
Could the proposal affect the Council's workforce or employment practices?		x



## Appendix 1

If you have answered **no** to all the questions above please complete **sections 5 and 6**.

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above please complete **section 4**.

#### 4. Considering the impact on equality and diversity

If you have not already done so, the impact on equality and diversity should be considered within your proposals prior to carrying out an **Equality Analysis**.

Considering equality and diversity will help to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and take active steps to create a discrimination free society by meeting a group or individual's needs and encouraging participation.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below and use the prompts for guidance.

- **How have you considered equality and diversity?**

N/A

- **Key findings**

N/A

- **Actions**

N/A

Date to scope and plan your Equality Analysis:

n/a

Date to complete your Equality Analysis:

n/a

Lead person for your Equality Analysis  
(Include name and job title):

n/a

#### 5. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening:

Name	Job title	Date
Rob Mahon	AD Financial Services	21.8.23

## 6. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given.

If this screening relates to a **Cabinet, key delegated officer decision, Council, other committee or a significant operational decision** a copy of the completed document should be attached as an appendix and published alongside the relevant report.

A copy of **all** screenings should also be sent to [equality@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk) For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file and also published on the Council's Equality and Diversity Internet page.

<b>Date screening completed</b>	21.8.23
<b>If relates to a Key Delegated Decision, Executive Board, Council or a Significant Operational Decision – report date and date sent for publication</b>	
<b>Date screening sent to Performance, Intelligence and Improvement</b> <a href="mailto:equality@rotherham.gov.uk">equality@rotherham.gov.uk</a>	21.8.23

Will the decision/proposal impact...	Impact	If an impact or potential impacts are identified			
		Describe impacts or potential impacts on emissions from the Council and its contractors.	Describe impact or potential impacts on emissions across Rotherham as a whole.	Describe any measures to mitigate emission impacts	Outline any monitoring of emission impacts that will be carried out
Emissions from non-domestic buildings?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from transport?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from waste, or the quantity of waste itself?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from housing and domestic buildings?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Emissions from construction and/or development?	<i>no impact on emissions</i>				
Carbon capture (e.g. through trees)?	<i>no impact</i>				
Identify any emission impacts associated with this decision that have not been covered by the above fields:					

Please provide a summary of all impacts and mitigation/monitoring measures:

As this report is a financial update on previous events, updates on levels of funding moving forwards and doesn't approve anything directly to happen, it does not have any carbon implications.

## Appendix 2

For information, the report references two development schemes, Thrybergh and Rother Valley Country Park, which although more energy efficient than current buildings, will not meet net zero standards when complete. This is due to increased financial pressures and will lead to increased borough and Council emissions in the long term.

Supporting information:	
Completed by: (Name, title, and service area/directorate).	Rob Mahon, Assistant Director Financial Services, Finance and Customer Services.
Please outline any research, data, or information used to complete this [form].	N/A
If quantities of emissions are relevant to and have been used in this form please identify which conversion factors have been used to quantify impacts.	N/A
Tracking [to be completed by Policy Support / Climate Champions]	Louise Preston, Climate Change Manager CIA135

**Appendix 1: Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – Work Programme 2023-24**

The following principles were endorsed by OSMB at its meeting of 5 July 2023 as criteria to long/short list each of the commission's respective priorities:

**Establish as a starting point:**

- 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

<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
14 June 2023	<b>Pre-decision</b> School Accessibility Strategy Finance Update Multiply Programme
5 July 2023	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report (2022/2023) Council Plan 2022-2025 and Year Ahead Delivery Plan Progress report Outturn report
13 September 2023	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action plan July 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report
11 October 2023	Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report (TBC). Pre-decision tbc
15 November 2023	Pre-decision tbc
13 December 2023	Council Plan 2022-2025 and Year Ahead Delivery Plan Progress report Complaints Annual Report (TBC)

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
	Pre-decision tbc
16 January 2024	Medium Term Financial Strategy Update Housing Revenue Account Rents and Service Charges HRA Business Plan
21 February 2024	Budget and Council Tax Report 2023/24 Pre-decision tbc
13 March 2024	Climate Change Action Plan and Annual Report Social Value Annual Report Pre-decision tbc
10 April 2024	Pre-decision tbc

### Items for Scheduling

Review Activity	
Starting Autumn 2023	<b>Spotlight Review</b> <b>Byelaws/Life saving equipment</b>
Visits/meetings to be arranged	<b>Cost of living pressures</b> <b>Focus on</b> energy efficiency; financial inclusion; crisis food support (specifically social supermarkets); school uniform (working with the Youth Cabinet); and communications, awareness and targeting  Employment Solutions Team
Commencing Autumn 2023	<b>Spotlight Review</b> <b>Consultation and Engagement (agreed at meeting of 14 December 2022)</b>
DATE TBC (late November)	Children Commissioner's Takeover Challenge – meeting with Youth Cabinet

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**  
**1 September 2023 – 30 November 2023**

This is formal notice under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 of Key Decisions due to be taken by the Authority and of those parts of the Cabinet meeting identified in this Forward Plan will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information as defined in the Local Government Act 1972.

Contact Information:-

Democratic Services  
Riverside House  
Main Street  
Rotherham  
S60 1AE

Email: [governance@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:governance@rotherham.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01709 822477

### What is the Forward Plan?

The Forward Plan contains all the key decisions the Council expects to take over the next three months. It will be refreshed monthly and will give at least 28 days' notice of any Key Decisions and, if applicable, the Cabinet's intention to discuss an item in private. This gives you the opportunity to submit relevant documents to the decision maker concerning any individual Key Decisions and draws to your attention any relevant constitution process.

### What is a Key Decision?

A Key Decision is one which is likely to:-

- relate to the capital or revenue budget framework that is reserved to the Council, or
- result in income, expenditure or savings of £400,000 or greater, or
- have a significant effect on two or more wards

A Key Decision can be made by the Cabinet. The Forward Plan also includes some matters which are not Key Decisions under the heading "Decisions which are not Key Decisions".

### What does the Forward Plan tell me?

The plan gives information about:

- what key decisions are to be made in the next three months.
- the matter in respect of which the decision is to be made.
- who will make the key decisions.
- when those key decisions are likely to be made.
- what documents will be considered.
- who you can contact for further information.

### Who takes Key Decisions?

Under the Authority's Constitution, Key Decisions are taken by the Cabinet. Key Decisions are taken at public meetings of the Cabinet. The Cabinet meets once a month on a Monday at 10.00am at Rotherham Town Hall. Meeting dates for 2022/23 are:

20 June 2022	19 September 2022	21 November 2022	23 January 2023	20 March 2023	15 May 2023
11 July 2022	17 October 2022	19 December 2022	13 February 2023	24 April 2023	

### Further information and Representations about items proposed to be heard in Private

Names of contact officers are included in the Plan.

If you wish to make representations that a decision which is proposed to be heard in private should instead be dealt with in public, you should contact Democratic Services by no later than five clear working days before the meeting. At the end of this document are extracts from the Local Government Act 1972 setting out the descriptions of information which may be classed as "exempt", and the definition of confidential information.

### The members of the Cabinet and their areas of responsibility are: -

Councillor Chris Read	Leader of the Council
Councillor Sarah Allen	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working
Councillor Saghir Alam	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance
Councillor Dominic Beck	Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment
Councillor Victoria Cusworth	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Councillor Denise Lelliott	Cabinet Member for Jobs and Local Economy
Councillor David Roche	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health
Councillor David Sheppard	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion



Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
<b>KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 18 SEPTEMBER</b>								
<b>ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH</b>								
Stag Willow Extra Care Scheme	June 2023	To agree proposals for the future of Oaktrees (Stag Willow) Extracare Scheme, regarding both the service model and the permanent closure of the main building.	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Sitwell	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy	June 2023	To agree the RMBC damp, mould and condensation policy.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officer and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Re-procurement of a local Healthwatch Service	August 2023	To seek approval to enter into a competitive tender to secure ongoing service from April 2024.	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant officers, Members and Stakeholders	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>								
Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2023	June 2023	To approve the commencement of a statutory review of Polling Places and Polling District Consultation paper	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Sharon Kemp Tel: 01709 822770 sharon.kemp@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>								
July 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report	June 2023	To note the current revenue and capital monitoring position and agree any required actions.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Council Building De-carbonisation Programme	March 2023	That Cabinet: 1) Approves the procurement of a partner to support the development and delivery of decarbonisation works. 2) Approves the use of £3.147m of grant funding to deliver the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme plus a contribution of £431,868 from the existing Council capital allocation. 3) Approves the procurement process for a potential heat delivery contract to provide heat to applicable Council owned properties. 4) Note that following the Procurement exercise an update and proposed next steps will be brought to Cabinet for consideration.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders	Report and appendices	All Wards	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT</b>								
Mainline Station Update	June 2023	To receive an update on the Mainline Station project and approve land acquisition negotiations and exploration of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant officers and Cabinet Members.	Report and appendices.	Boston Castle; Rotherham West	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Joint Regional Statement of Common Ground	August 2023	To agree that the Council be a signatory to the SYMCA Statement of Common Ground.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, officers and stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
<b>NON-KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2023</b>								
<b>ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH</b>								
Public Health Proposals to Drugs and Alcohol Grant 2022-25 - Annual Update	June 2023	To approve the proposals and note the annual update.	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant Members, officers, stakeholders	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>								
LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan	June 2023	To receive the report from the LGA on the outcome of the Corporate Peer Challenge and agree the accompanying action plan.	Leader of the Council	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Jo Brown Tel: 01709 255269 jo.brown@rotherham.gov.uk
Scrutiny Review Recommendations - Impact of Selective Licensing	June 2023	To receive the report and consider the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review by Improving Places Select Commission.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Jo Brown Tel: 01709 255269 jo.brown@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>								
Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action plan	August 2023	To endorse the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
New Applications for Business Rates Relief for Labre's Hope Community Interest Company, Fusion@Magna, Beacon South Yorkshire Ltd, Miramar Judo Academy Ltd and Unity Boxing Centre CIC	June 2023	To consider the recommendations for new applications for Business Rates discretionary relief.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
<b>KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 16 OCTOBER 2023 OR LATER</b>								
<b>ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH</b>								
Housing Acquisitions Policy	August 2023	To approve the implementation of the Housing Delivery Strategic Acquisitions Policy.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Eastwood Sites Housing Development	August 2023	To approve to build c. 36 new homes for Council rent on the Netherfield Court & York Road sites in Eastwood.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Rotherham East	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Maltby Sites Housing Development	August 2023	To approve to build c. 52 new homes for Council rent on the Addison Road, Larch Road and Elm Tree Road sites in Maltby. To approve the appropriation of the Addison Road and Larch Road sites from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account.	Cabinet Member for Housing	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Hellaby & Maltby West	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
Tobacco Control Review	August 2023	To endorse the plans for Tobacco Control and delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to manage the Tobacco Control.	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES</b>								
Department for Education Short Breaks Innovation Programme	September 2023	To provide an update on delivery and spend against the 23/24 Department for Education short breaks innovation programme and request approval for proposed delivery and spend against 24/25 DfE short breaks innovation grant (subject to allocation by the DfE).	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Nicola Curley nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk

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<b>FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>								
Covid Recovery Fund	March 2023	To note the use of the Covid Recovery Fund during 2022/23. To approve the proposed use of the remaining Covid Recovery Fund	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders	Report	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
Rotherham Council Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Expansion	September 2023	To note the progress of the EV infrastructure expansion in Rotherham.	Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>REGNERATION AND ENVIRONMENT</b>								
Planning Local Labour Policy	August 2023	To approve a local labour policy setting out the approach to securing local labour agreements with developers through the planning system.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy	August 2023	To approve the revised policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, officers and stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>NON-KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 16 OCTOBER 2023 OR LATER</b>								
<b>ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND HEALTH</b>								
Adult Social Care Local Account 2022-23	September 2023	Agreement to publish the Adult Social Care Local Account	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk

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<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE</b>								
Family Hubs Update	August 2023	To provide an update on Family Hubs & Start for Life progress	Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Nicola Curley nicola.curley@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>								
New Applications for Business Rates Relief	December 2022	That Cabinet approve the applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT</b>								
Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review Recommendations - Modern Slavery	June 2023	To approve the response to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Scrutiny Review recommendations on Modern Slavery.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, officers, stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 20 NOVEMBER 2023 OR LATER</b>								
<b>ADULT CARE, HOUSING AND HEALTH</b>								
Canklow Housing and Learning Disability Development	August 2023	Approve construction of new council properties on the Warden Street site including two specialist accommodation dwellings for people with complex needs, alongside the Castle View day centre.	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhood Working	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Boston Castle	Open	Ian Spicer Tel: 01709 255992 ian.spicer@rotherham.gov.uk

Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
<b>ASSISITANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S</b>								
Crisis Support 2024 - 2027	September 2023	To consider recommendations for a new model of crisis support and to approve entering into a service level agreement with partners for the three years 2024/25, 25/26 and 26/27.	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Jo Brown Tel: 01709 255269 jo.brown@rotherham.gov.uk
Advice Services and Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Service Level Agreements 2024-2027	September 2023	To consider recommendations for Service Level Agreements for (i) voluntary and community sector infrastructure and (ii) advice services, for the three years 2024/25, 25/26 and 26/27."	Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Jo Brown Tel: 01709 255269 jo.brown@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>								
Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2023 - Approval of Polling Districts and Polling Places Scheme	September 2023	To seek Cabinets recommendation to Council that the recommendations in the Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2023 are accepted and that the Electoral Registration Officer makes the necessary amendments to the polling districts to take effect from publication of the revised register on 1 December 2023	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Sharon Kemp Tel: 01709 822770 sharon.kemp@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>FINANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>								
September 2023-24 Financial Monitoring Report	September 2023	To note the current revenue and capital monitoring position and agree any required actions.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update	September 2023	To note the updates to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk



Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Disposal of land at Doncaster Gate Rotherham	September 2023	To seek approval to the disposal of the ground lease	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Boston Castle	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT</b>								
Borough wide PSPO	June 2023	To approve a Borough wide Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) following consultation and at point of renewal.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Town Centre/Clifton Park PSPO	June 2023	To approve a Town Centre/Clifton Park Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) following consultation.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices.	Boston Castle; Rotherham East	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Sex Establishment Policy	September 2023	To approve the revised policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
Rotherham Markets & Central Library	August 2023	To approve the implementation of the Markets & Central Library development.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Boston Castle	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
House to House Collection Policy	September 2023	To approve amended House to House Collection Policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk



Decision title	Date added to the Forward Plan	What is the decision?	Cabinet Portfolio	Who will be consulted	Documents to be considered	Wards affected	Is the decision to be made in private	Directorate and contact for further information
Licensing Act - Cumulative Impact Policy	August 2023	To approve the Cumulative Impact Policy.	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	All Wards	Open	Paul Woodcock Tel: 01709 822971 paul.woodcock@rotherham.gov.uk
<b>NON-KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN ON 20 NOVEMBER OR LATER</b>								
<b>FINCANCE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>								
New Applications for Business Rates Relief	June 2023	To consider the recommendation for a new application for Business Rates discretionary relief.	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report	All Wards	Open	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk
Disposal of 1 Treefield Close Rotherham	September 2023	To seek approval to the direct disposal of the property	Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy	Relevant Members, Officers and Stakeholders.	Report and appendices	Greasbrough	Part exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Judith Badger Tel: 01709 822046 judith.badger@rotherham.gov.uk

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 SCHEDULE 12A**  
**ACCESS TO INFORMATION: EXEMPT INFORMATION**  
**PART 1**  
**DESCRIPTIONS OF EXEMPT INFORMATION: ENGLAND**

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes –
  - a. to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - b. to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

**PART 2**  
**QUALIFICATIONS: ENGLAND**

*Paragraphs 1-8 repealed.*

- 9 Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.
- 10 Information which –
  - a. falls within any of paragraphs 1 to 7 above; and
  - b. is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of paragraph 8 or 9 above, is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**  
**SECTION 100A(3) – DEFINITION OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

Confidential information means –

- a. information furnished to the council by a Government department upon terms (however expressed) which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public; and
- b. information the disclosure of which to the public is prohibited by or under any enactment or by the order of a court;

and, in either case, the reference to the obligation of confidence is to be construed accordingly.