

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Friday, 12th February, 2016

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Beck, Cowles, Hamilton, Hughes, Reynolds, Sansome, J. Turner, Whelbourn and Wyatt.

Also in attendance : Council Yasseen (Advisory Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mallinder and Pitchley.

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

95. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

96. EARLY HELP SAVINGS PROPOSALS 16/17-17/18 (REPORT HEREWITH)

Consideration was given to a report, presented jointly by the Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services and the Assistant Director, Early Help and Family Engagement, concerning the budget savings proposals for the Early Help Service which were to be considered in the context of the need to set a balanced and sustainable Council budget for 2016/17 onwards and in accordance with the Council's outline Medium Term Financial Strategy. Details of the Early Help Service budget savings proposals were appended to the submitted report.

The presentation of the report highlighted:-

: statistics relating to the use of services (eg: targeted youth work; open access youth centres), unit costs, demonstrable outcomes and the impact of budget reductions upon service delivery; (Members requested details of the reported statistics);

: specific early help services (eg: help and advice for vulnerable young people on issues such as advice on personal safety; family engagement; substance misuse; the prevention of the exploitation of vulnerable young people) and local authorities' statutory duty to keep children safe.

: the trend for local authorities to alter youth service provision from a universal service to targeted youth services;

: the overall requirement for the Council to achieve a balanced budget.

Members discussed the following salient issues:-

: discussions with other local authorities and with youth charities in order to seek out innovative practice relating to the provision of youth services, in the light of the need to continue achieving budget savings; the monitoring and review of service delivery;

: whether the proposals and the budget savings would ensure that this Council's Children's Services will continue to be 'fit for purpose'; Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board expressed the view that the retention of a universal service must be given serious consideration, alongside the use of specifically targeted services (Members quoted at length from the reports on Council services prepared by both Professor Alexis Jay and by Louise Casey);

: reference was made to the representations made to the Council by Sarah Champion M.P., expressing concern about the proposed reductions in the Early Help Service budget;

: it was emphasised that Children's Services will retain a significant budget; in addition, the importance of partnership working was acknowledged, with organisations such as Reachout UK, which works with disadvantaged young people; other examples were the Clifton and the Kimberworth community partnerships; it was also acknowledged that the capacity within the voluntary sector, in terms of providing services for children and young people, was currently under-utilised;

: service reconfiguration (eg: the co-location of Children's Centre leaders, education welfare officers, social workers and youth workers) building on the strengths and expertise of each service; this service reconfiguration aimed to respond to criticisms expressed particularly in the report by Professor Alexis Jay;

: representations previously made to Central Government, by a number of local authorities, in opposition to the budget reductions; acknowledging the continuing challenges of service provision (eg: the national shortage of social workers);

: local authorities being able to ensure that the Early Help Service and the process of early intervention are structured to provide better options for children, both in terms of making the best use of the limited available resources and providing value for money;

: Members requested further information about the portfolio of the buildings which are used for the provision of services for Children in communities throughout the Rotherham Borough area; and whether service provision would be assisted by the shared use of buildings and the use of premises owned by other organisations such as parish councils;

: the minibuses used for the delivery of youth work services, which are capable of being deployed in all areas of the Rotherham Borough

: discussion took place on some of the examples included in the report by Professor Alexis Jay : eg: of young people suffering difficulties caused by mental health issues, domestic violence, non-school attendance, substance abuse;

: the vision of future service delivery should be informed by the views obtained from young people themselves (eg: from the Youth Cabinet); acknowledging the value of services such as Sure Start; the responsibility to meet the needs of young people so that they have places to go and things to do; the responsibility of the wider community and young people having pathways in to youth service provision;

: from October 2015, the availability of one single, dedicated telephone number (and a form to be submitted via electronic mail) for people asking for Early Help services; ensuring a quick response time; this revised service is valued by the Council's partner organisations and a new protocol is being developed which will have its effectiveness monitored;

: the model of service provision by detached and outreach youth work, support for hard-to-reach groups of young people, who are often the most vulnerable (eg: the importance of the Lesbian, Gay, Trans-gender and Bi-sexual (LGTB) group) and the possible impact of reductions in the number of youth work posts/personnel on these services);

: the limitations of youth service facilities; examples of some youngsters who prefer to spend their time other facilities such as fast-food outlets; ensuring that youth workers will engage effectively with young people;

: the budgetary pressures imposed upon other key stakeholders in the provision of services for young people (eg: health services, Police, colleges); the service consultation process which will take place during the month from late February to late March 2016;

: the re-launch of the Children and Young People partnership and the development of a revised Children and Young People's Plan for the Rotherham Borough;

: the use of digital technology is one aspect of service provision (eg: e-safety issues, combatting the known dangers of young people's participation in on-line gaming and the development of the 'Be-Safe' smart app);

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That, subject to resolution (3) below, the revenue budget savings proposals for the Early Help Service, as now detailed in the submitted reports, be accepted and referred for further consideration by the

Commissioners and by the Council.

(3) That, further to resolution (2) above, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board expresses the view that the Council must carefully consider the impact of the proposed budget reductions for the Early Help Service, in order to ensure that the children and young people of the Rotherham Borough are to be properly safeguarded in the future and the concerns about the proposed budget reductions, now recorded at this meeting, shall inform the budget and Council Tax setting process for the 2016/17 financial year and beyond.

(4) That a further report on the provision and structure of the Early Help Service be submitted to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board after the finalisation of the Council's revenue budget for the 2016/17 financial year and including the outcome of the forthcoming service consultation process.

97. BUDGET FEEDBACK RESPONSES

Further to Minute No. 4 of the Advisory Cabinet/Commissioners' Decision-making meeting held on 18th January, 2016 and Minute No. 85 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 22nd January, 2016, consideration was given to a report of the Head of Policy, Improvement and Partnership which provided clarification on specific issues, questions and queries, as raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board during its meetings and discussions about Budget-related issues in the period from October, 2015 to January, 2016. The report stated that the various Budget proposals had been put forward so that the Council may meet its forecast cumulative Budget challenge over the next three years, now expected to be in the order of £48 millions. Appended to the report were:-

- a summary of Commissioner Manzie's responses to key Overview and Scrutiny Management Board issues and discussion points;
- a copy of the Equality Assessment for budget saving proposal reference EDS 5 E and F (online benefit claims);
- details of the Legal Services income streams relating to proposal reference RES 21 B;
- a further briefing on the proposals associated with regard to the visitor centre (reference EDS 2);
- a copy of the Equalities Assessment for Blue Badge parking change proposals, Rother Valley Country Park;
- information relating to the take-up of free school meals;
- information about the foster care agencies which are active in Rotherham.

Members discussed issues concerning the budgets for the Rotherham Investment and Development Office and about business incubation centres within the Borough area.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the revenue budget savings proposals, as now detailed in the submitted reports, be accepted and referred for further consideration by the Commissioners and by the Council.

98. ISSUES REFERRED FROM THE AREA ASSEMBLIES

There were no issues to report.

99. YOUTH CABINET/YOUNG PEOPLE'S ISSUES

Planning meetings continue to be held with the Youth Cabinet, in advance of the Children's Commissioner Take-over Day meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, scheduled to be held on Tuesday 23rd February, 2016, commencing at 5.00 pm. A briefing meeting for Elected Members will take place earlier that day, beginning at 4.00 p.m. The focus of the meeting will be on mental health issues.

100. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 15TH AND 22ND JANUARY, 2016

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, held on 15th January, 2016 and on 22nd January, 2016, be approved as correct records for signature by the Chairman.

101. WORK IN PROGRESS

Improving Places Select Commission:-

Councillor Beck, Chair of the Improving Places Select Commission, reported that the forthcoming meeting of the Select Commission will consider the following matters:-

Litter and fly tipping – progress of the Task and Finish Group;
Rotherham Town Centre Masterplan;
Improving Places - scrutiny work programme 2016/17.

Improving Lives Select Commission:-

Councillor Hamilton, Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission, reported that, at its most recent meeting, the Select Commission had considered:-

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board – Annual Report 2014/15;
Safeguarding Children and Families – regular performance monitoring.

Health Select Commission:-

Councillor Sansome, Chair of the Health Select Commission, reported

that Vice-Chair, Councillor Mallinder, had recently attended the summit meeting, arranged by the Care Quality Commission, which included a quality assessment of the Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber (RDaSH) NHS Foundation Trust.

Audit Committee:-

Councillor Wyatt, Chair of the Audit Committee, reported that the Price Waterhouse Copper company had prepared a health check report about this Council's Internal Audit services, which would be considered by the Committee in the near future. The Committee was also making progress with its reviews of the Council's various risk registers

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board:-

Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, reported on recent discussions with the Council's Chief Executive about the scrutiny work programme for 2016/17.

102. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be held as follows:-

- Tuesday 23rd February 2016 – Children's Commissioner Take-over Day meeting, commencing at 5.00 p.m.
- Friday 26th February 2016 – scheduled meeting, commencing at 9.00 a.m.