

APPENDIX B

Rotherham MBC Corporate “*Fresh Start*” Improvement Plan: Eight Month Progress Update Summary Report, to January 2016

Purpose of this report

1. In line with the Secretary of State’s reporting requirements, this Appendix provides the Departments for Communities & Local Government and Education with a progress update on the implementation of the corporate “*Fresh Start*” Improvement Plan, through to the end of January 2016. It follows the initial three-month progress update that was included in the Commissioners’ report of 26th August 2015.

Background: requirements of the original Directions of 26 February 2015

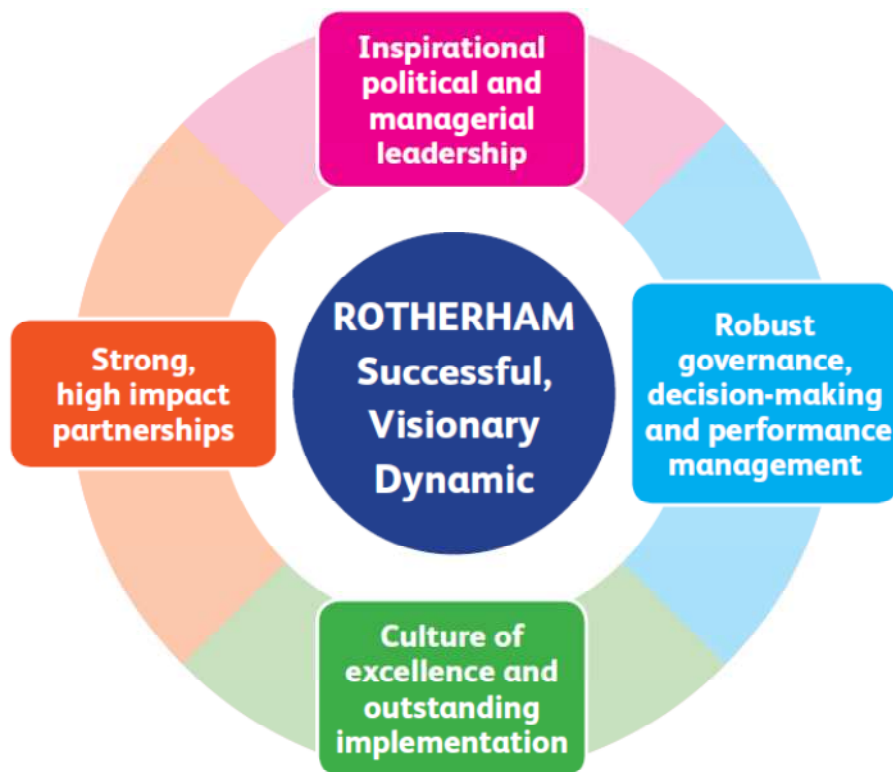
2. The Secretary of State Directions of 26th February 2015 required, under the direction of the Managing Director Commissioner and Children’s Social Care Commissioner, improvement plans to be prepared and submitted to Government within 3 months (i.e. by 26 May 2015). The Directions go on to specify that the plans must set out the “*measures to be undertaken, together with milestones and delivery targets against which to measure performance, in order to deliver rapid and sustainable improvements in governance, leadership and culture in the Authority, in the Authority’s exercise of its overview and scrutiny functions and in its performance of services, thereby securing compliance with the best value duty and securing the performance of the Authority’s children’s social care functions to the required standard*”.
3. A detailed improvement plan for specific improvements in Children’s Social Care at the Council was prepared and first submitted to Ofsted in February 2015, under the direction of the Commissioner for Children’s Social Care, Malcolm Newsam (who was first appointed by the Secretary of State for Education to the Council in October 2014). Following the formal appointment of other Commissioners to Rotherham after the 26 February 2015 Directions, a further, corporate improvement plan was prepared – “*A Fresh Start*” – covering the improvements required across the entire organisation following the findings of Louise Casey’s Corporate Governance Inspection (CGI) report.
4. The Directions also set out a specific requirement for the Secretaries of State to be provided with progress reports on the plans, agreed with the Lead and other Commissioners, at 6 monthly intervals following the date of the Directions; with the first progress report on the corporate “*Fresh Start*” plan provided as part of the Commissioners report to Government dated 26th February 2015.

Links to the Commissioners’ “*Mission Statement*”

5. In light of the requirements in the Directions, a key outcome identified in the Commissioners’ *Mission Statement* for their work in Rotherham, published 4 March 2015, is (Outcome 7): “*A successful Improvement Plan. Others care about Rotherham’s progress. We want to ensure credible, honest progress is recognised*”.

Rotherham's corporate Improvement Plan: "A Fresh Start" (May 2015)

6. The organisation-wide 'Fresh Start' Improvement Plan was therefore developed as the "sister plan" to the Children and Young People's Services Improvement Action Plan, through a process led by Commissioners in consultation with Elected Members, senior management, wider council staff, key partners and external advisors on behalf of the Local Government Association (LGA). A final draft of the Plan was submitted to the Secretaries of State for Communities & Local Government and for Education on 26 May 2015.
7. The Plan's improvement actions are grouped in line with the following four themes, recognised as essentials of an effective, modern local authority:



8. The Plan covers a two year period, through to May 2017, with 2015/16 a "transition" year where the focus has been on putting in place the basic building blocks that the Council has required, to move towards a culture of continuous improvement in line with its best value duties. The actions in "Phase 2", from May 2016 - as the stronger leadership and new, more positive culture is embedded - will be reviewed and reported on in the coming weeks.

Implementing the "Fresh Start" Improvement Plan (Phase 1, "Transition")

9. The Council developed an implementation strategy for the "Fresh Start" Plan, building on the outline governance arrangements set out within the Plan document itself – i.e. a "Joint Board" of Commissioners and Members to oversee and challenge progress, drawing upon a supporting Officer Group. The Joint Board has

been meeting on a monthly basis since July 2015¹ to review progress, seek clarification on actions being taken and, where justified, agree any amendments to delivery timescales. Its membership includes all Commissioners alongside the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, and the leaders of the two opposition political groups. It is chaired by the Lead Commissioner, Sir Derek Myers.

10. The delivery strategy for the Plan also includes appropriate “RAG” ratings for each specific action, to demonstrate practical achievement of key outputs and milestones and help manage the implementation of change. These have been used in the monthly Joint Board reporting as well as within this report to help provide an overall summary of the progress being made. As set out in detail in the Commissioners report of 26 August 2015, clear and accountable project leads are in place for each action, alongside supporting project documentation. Support has also been made available through the Local Government Association (LGA) to help monitor the progress being reported and contribute to ensuring open and honest assessments of the genuine level of improvement being achieved.

Summary of overall progress to 31st January 2016 – Headlines

11. In total, there are 132 Improvement Plan project actions, each with its own RAG-rating. The following overall assessment of progress was reported to the most recent Joint Board meeting (15th February 2016), reflecting activity over the eight month period from the end of May 2015 to the end of January 2016:

Amber – on track	60	45%
Green – completed	64	48%
Red – at risk/missing target	7	5%
N/A – not yet due to start	1	1%

12. At this stage of implementation of Phase 1 (“Transition”), 48% of the identified actions are now complete, with required milestones met or outputs produced. This represents a steady and consistent positive trend of action completions throughout the Phase 1 period to date (e.g. with 14 projects completed since the December 2015 report to the Joint Board). Of the 60 projects rated “on track”, 19 (around a third) have ‘ongoing’ timescales without a specific completion date. A number of other projects are ‘on track’ with a scheduled completion date of end of March 2016, when it may be anticipated that a further, significant tranche of projects will to move to ‘Green’ in line with expected timescales.

Key, tangible achievements to date

13. Some of the key achievements and significant areas of progress reported to the Joint Board since the Commissioners’ six-month report of 26th August include the following:
 - i. **Agreeing the new senior management structure**, which was first agreed by full Council on 3 June 2015. Work has taken place since the summer of 2015 to advertise, recruit and appoint to a larger number of key senior positions,

¹ Public records of the Joint Board meetings are made available on the RMBC website at www.rotherham.gov.uk/info/200009/performance/998/see_our_plan_to_improve_rotherham/2

including the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive a number of new Strategic Directors and Assistant Directors across all parts of the council. Final appointments are now being made, including the new Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services (in post from 1st April 2016); and a process is underway to go out to the market for a second time for the new Strategic Director of Adult Services and Housing. The new Director for Regeneration, Damien Wilson, starts on the 25th April. This will then complete the new senior leadership team.

- ii. **Consulting citizens, businesses and partners on a new vision for Rotherham.** The successful delivery of an ambitious programme of public and partner consultation workshops to set a new vision for the council and the borough as a whole was a key priority from May to September 2015. The priority was to maximise reach into community groups, businesses and partner organisations, and provide as many people as possible the opportunity to express their views. In total, around 1,800 people were engaged through this programme - 804 roadshow attendees, 337 online responses, 578 further responses at the Rotherham Show and around 100 people engaged across two business-focused events. The results were presented in a final “Views from Rotherham” report² and were drawn upon by the Leader of the Council in setting out the new vision for the Council, presented at a public meeting of Commissioners and Elected Members on 28th October 2015.
- iii. **Agreeing with partner agencies the foundation of a new, expanded local strategic partnership for Rotherham – “Rotherham Together”** – so that the council can work more effectively with other public services (health, police, fire) as well as businesses, the community and voluntary sector, colleges and nearby universities. How the Council previously conducted itself in its dealings with partners was a key criticism in the CGI report and the new “Rotherham Together” partnership is a critical step in helping changing the culture of the council and how it works with its key partners in improving outcomes for the people of Rotherham. The expanded and reconstituted partnership met for the first time on 23 September 2015 and is due to set out a shared action plan for 2016/17 at an event on 17th March 2016, which will include further public engagement and the eventual finalisation of a new Community Strategy for Rotherham.
- iv. **A re-invigorated Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB)**, with new Chair and Vice Chair arrangements, which has agreed a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the borough. This, in particular, is ensuring positive and focused joint working with partners in health services, so critical for the future success of the Council and for Rotherham’s citizens.
- v. **Strengthening links between the Children and Young People’s Partnership and Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) with the Adult and**

² See www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/download/240/views_from_rotherham_-_consultation_reports

Children's Safeguarding Boards – new Independent Chairs have been appointed to the two safeguarding boards, with scheduled liaison meetings (and will attend the HWB to present their Annual Reports and relevant strategies – e.g. the report of the Children's Board was presented to the HWB in January 2016).

- vi. **Finalising a programme of peer service review health checks** in partnership with the LGA - for the services areas of housing, waste, highways/transport and leisure, sport and culture - to ensure that Commissioners and Elected Members received an independent, external view of how services are being run throughout the organisation. These health check reports were all completed by November 2015 and brought to the Joint Board for consideration. The findings and recommendations are now informing service-level improvement work through associated business and service planning, in many cases led by new Strategic and Assistant Director oversight.
- vii. **Governance arrangements and transformation programme agreed for Adult services modernisation** – An Adult Social Care Programme Board has been set up, supported by project boards and a member working party established to support the programme. Radical change to these services is now underway, which will continue over the next three years, delivering both efficiencies and improved service outcomes for residents.
- viii. **Improvements in the numbers of staff with active Performance Development Review plans (PDRs)**, which were increased from around 60% to around 96% of the workforce by September 2015; with an audit taking place to check on their quality.
- ix. **Report produced on different governance models** – a member task and finish group has produced a final draft report, which the Independent Chair will share with the Lead Commissioner, and submit to the Council to shape the Council's approach to governance and decision making from the 2016/17 municipal year (i.e. following the May local elections).
- x. **Rotherham 'Be a Councillor' campaign** – which successfully attracted interest from members of the public becoming councillors from the all-out local elections in May 2016. In total, information and development sessions were provided to 69 potential candidates.
- xi. **Improved financial management** – an outline Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was agreed by full Council on 9th December, a revised version for final consideration was agreed at the full Council meeting on 2 March 2016. This provides the Council a better basis upon which to deliver its priorities and plans and address the transformation and savings it needs to deliver, over the next three years (and beyond).
- xii. **Developing and embedding new approaches to the budget process** – which have generated a much more rigorous approach, fully engaging

members and the council's formal scrutiny processes (as well as trade unions) in all budget-related proposals (both revenue and capital programmes), as part of setting out the new MTFS and Budget from 2016/17.

- xiii. **Council agreement to first versions of new Performance Management Framework and Corporate Plan**, which were agreed by elected members at full Council on 9th December 2015 and are now in the process of being finalised for 2016/17 onwards under the leadership of the new Chief Executive and senior leadership team.
- xiv. **New Member Code of Conduct** – developed by a Standards Committee Working Group and supported by a supplementary local code, this was also approved by Full Council on 9th December and sets out the high standards to be upheld by elected members as they work together with officers and the public, and as representatives of the authority.
- xv. **Risk management** – the corporate risk management framework has been renewed. A new Risk Management Policy & Strategy has been agreed, underpinned by revised Strategic and Directorate risk registers.
- xvi. **Use of Directors and “M3” (middle managers) group to discuss staff management and related issues** – the use of these groups to share information and explore issues has become an established way of doing business in Rotherham.

Actions delayed or at risk of slippage

- 14. At this stage 5% of actions (7 out of 132) are assessed as behind schedule, where the target completion date has been or is likely to be missed. This has been a consistent, relatively low level of slippage, which has been broadly regarded by the Joint Board as an acceptable situation, in part because some of the factors have been beyond the direct control of the Council (e.g. the inability to appoint to the Strategic Director for Adult Services and Housing following the first recruitment exercise). It also reflects that the fact that, in a minority of cases, original timescales set in May 2015 were not always fully deliverable in practice; or where some actions have not been able to be progressed because of interdependencies with other activity (e.g. where key senior officer appointments have been required to be finalised before wider changes in those service/policy areas can be delivered).
- 15. A key issue in this respect is around developing the Council's new approach to neighbourhood-level working (part of the Plan's "Strong, high impact partnerships" theme). This work is underway, with the Managing Director Commissioner undertaking a review of the current structure and approach prior to her departure at the end of January 2016. This work has now been handed over to the new Chief Executive and recently appointed lead Advisory Cabinet Member for this service area, with a view to introducing new ways of working during the 2016/17 municipal year.
- 16. Other areas where there has been some particular slippage are reviewing the Council's long term approach to Personal Development Reviews, which is linked to the finalisation of the council's new Workforce Strategy, Corporate Plan and

Performance Management Framework (part of the Plan's "Robust governance and performance management" theme). Similarly, there have been delays in creating a new cross-council performance team, which is now to be taken forward following the appointment of the new Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive (and an initial review of this function carried out by the Managing Director Commissioner). There has also been a delay in finalising a new, rolling communication and engagement plan for the Council, in part due to a fundamental restructure of the Communications Team. A draft of this plan has, however, now been produced so that it can come into effect from 2016/17.

Looking ahead to "Phase 2" of the Improvement Plan (from May 2016)

17. There are a number of projects within the first phase of the Plan's delivery which will necessarily need to be carried forward into Phase 2– i.e. from May 2016 – either because they have a long term original timeframe, or there has been some slippage in delivery and consequent revision by the Joint Board to target timescales. The original Improvement Plan document also included some outline actions for Phase 2, to take forward and embed strong leadership and a new culture throughout the organisation (see Item 5 on this agenda), which are now in the process of being reconsidered in the Council's current context (including a new Corporate Plan).
18. There are also a number of projects with timescales specified as 'ongoing', mainly because they relate to the embedding of new processes, procedures and ways of working into 'business as usual'. These will also need to be critically reconsidered in terms of whether any need to continue as specific projects under the aegis of the corporate Improvement Plan.
19. In summary, projects which may need to be carried forward, subject to the remaining projects being delivered to expected timescales, are:

Theme	Project	Reason
Inspirational political and management leadership	2.1.1b – Reinforcement of leadership and management values	Completion date August 2016
	4.3.2 – Review and revise Council equality policies and strategies	To embed new policies and strategies into day to day business once they are agreed
	4.3.3 – Wide ranging discussions around community leadership etc. in the context of equalities and diverse communities	Completion date July 2018 (a long term programme)
	5.2.1 – Creation of programme of citizen engagement, linked to rolling annual communication plan	Original target for completion by Dec 2015 deferred
Culture of excellence and outstanding implementation	17.8.4 Review of customer services and libraries	To implement agreed approach, linked to Customer Services strategy and implementation of new Environment and Regeneration structures (and associated new Strategic Directors)
	20.1.2 Agree strategic view of next stages of Customer Service access	To implement new strategy, following appointment of Strategic Director, Finance & Customer Services (April 2016)
Strong, high impact partnerships	22.1.1 – Review of council and partnership teams acting in neighbourhoods 22.1.2 – Review of Area Assemblies 22.1.3 – Proposed future approach to Council neighbourhood services	Slippage from original target date and need to involve incoming senior managers/elected members (as well as Governance review findings). Revised completion date to be agreed as part of Phase 2 Plan, but anticipated to be from end of June 2016 onwards.

29. The expectation is that a number of these projects need to be re-formatted and re-scoped in the context of moving forward from May 2016 - with a new Political Executive and a complete senior leadership team - as part of Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan. Actions arising from the completed service health checks and other reviews of corporate services may also need to be included in the next phase of the Plan.

Conclusion

30. This reports aims to summarise the key headlines of the implementation of the corporate “Fresh Start” Improvement Plan between the end of May 2015 and the

end of January 2016 – 8 months of the first 12 months of associated activity. In general, consistent and positive progress is being made, with ongoing challenge and oversight being provided via the Joint Board; and specific areas of delay or slippage have been regarded as acceptable to date (but nevertheless subject to ongoing, focused management action).

31. Oversight of the delivery and implementation of the “Fresh Start” Improvement Plan from February 2016 is being handed over to the new Chief Executive and senior strategic management team. At this time initial focus is also being given to the production of the Phase 2 Improvement Plan, linked to the “normal running” of the Council through a Performance Management Framework (to be embedded) and a new Corporate Plan. This will also now need to take account of part-roll back of powers from February 2016, to ensure that improvement actions enable members to discharge these responsibilities effectively with appropriate officer support. The roll-back of powers is itself, however, wider evidence of the Council’s improvement efforts starting to re-build confidence in the authority.