

Summary Sheet

Cabinet/Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting 6th June 2016

Title: Rotherham: A Child-Centred Borough

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

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected All

Summary

1. One of the priorities in the Improvement Plan for Rotherham Council is for Rotherham to become a 'Child-Centred Borough'. The aim of a Child-Centred Borough is for communities of children, young people and adults, including the Elected Members as locally democratically elected representatives, to combine their resources to support every child to be the best they can. The strength of resources within families can be better utilised in realising the potential of children and young people and therefore the strategy will focus on how better links can be made, both within the council and with partners, to ensure that families are supported to thrive.
2. This paper sets out the aspirations for Rotherham to become a borough that is recognisably child centred in the development of its policies, its community developments, its building programmes, its sports and leisure facilities and in its service delivery. It is intended that Rotherham becomes a place where it is clear that it is understood that children and young people represent the most important investment that can be made in order to secure a vibrant, healthy

and productive future for its people and for generations to come. Given the impact across communities it will be essential to garner the views of, and ensure ongoing engagement with, stakeholders of all ages.

3. The ambition starts by declaring that Rotherham wants every child to have a positive start in life and a good childhood so they can grow into well adjusted, emotionally resilient individuals who will enjoy healthy and mutually respectful relationships in adulthood, become responsible citizens and be able to be good parents to their own children when the time comes. The first group of children who must benefit from the following proposal must be the children who are in the care of the council and for whom the council are the 'Corporate Parents'.
4. The proposal makes recommendations about how, as a Borough-wide community, Rotherham can translate the ambitions into a tangible reality through creation of a member-led working group. The approach will seek for every child, including children in the care of the Council, to have a good childhood and work together to give every child the best start in life and to support the development of the next generation of citizens.
5. The paper recommends that Rotherham's Lifestyle Survey can provide insights into the experiences of children and young people, and measure the success of plans to become a Child-Centred Borough. It also sets out an aspiration for a Child-Centred Borough around the following six principles:
 - a focus on the rights and voice of the child;
 - keeping children safe and healthy;
 - ensuring children reach their potential;
 - an inclusive borough;
 - harnessing the resources of communities;
 - a sense of place.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Commissioner Bradwell agree:

1. The ambition for Rotherham to become a Child-Centred Borough;
2. The six priority principles of a Child-Centred Borough;
3. The establishment of a member-led working group to develop the actions to achieve the priorities for a Child-Centred Borough, including how impact will be measured;
4. The publication of the Voice of the Child Lifestyle Survey report, as a benchmark for future years' monitoring of the success of the Child-Centred Borough ambitions in changing the experiences of children and young people in Rotherham;
5. A report on progress at regular intervals, commencing with a follow up report in October 2016.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1: Lifestyle Survey Report: 2015

Appendix 2: Trend data from the Rotherham Lifestyle Survey

Background Papers

Rotherham Improvement Plan, 2015

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required No

Exempt from the Press and Public No

Title: Rotherham: A Child-Centred Borough

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Commissioner Bradwell agree:
- 1.1.1 The ambition for Rotherham to become a Child-Centred Borough;
 - 1.1.2 The six priority principles of a Child-Centred Borough;
 - 1.1.3 The establishment of a member-led working group to develop the actions to achieve the priorities for a Child-Centred Borough, including how impact will be measured;
 - 1.1.4 The publication of the Voice of the Child Lifestyle Survey report, as a benchmark for future years' monitoring of the success of the Child-Centred Borough ambitions in changing the experiences of children and young people in Rotherham;
 - 1.1.5 A report on progress at regular intervals, commencing with a follow up report in October 2016.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Leader of Rotherham Council has set out his vision for Rotherham, which includes four priorities:
- 1. Every child making the best start in life
 - 2. Every adult secure, responsible and empowered
 - 3. A strong community in a clean, safe environment
 - 4. Extending opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future
- 2.2 In addition, a further priority is to make sure the Council is an organisation capable of delivering this vision, namely running a modern, efficient Council.
- 2.3 Further to the commitment that every child makes the best start in life, one of the priorities in the Improvement Plan for Rotherham Council is for Rotherham to become a 'Child-Centred Borough'.
- 2.4 There have been positive developments for Rotherham children over recent months and years. For example, school readiness (children achieving a good level of development at the end of reception year) has improved to now be above national averages, trends of GCSE achievement are now better than national averages, and the rate of under-18 conceptions in the borough has reduced and is now the same as the England average.
- 2.5 However, there is more to be done to ensure that Rotherham children have the best start in life, and have high aspirations. For example, 18.3% of Rotherham mothers smoke during pregnancy, compared to 11.4% nationally, which contributes to increased risk of stillbirth, low birth weight and neonatal deaths. A figure of 21.6% of children leaving primary school are obese, compared to 19.1% nationally, and 5.9% of 16-18 year olds in Rotherham are not in employment, education or training, compared to 4.7% nationally.

- 2.6 The aim of a Child-Centred Borough is for communities of children, young people and adults, including the Elected Members as locally democratically elected representatives, to combine their resources to support every child to be the best they can – the family is the nucleus of the community and the child. As a Borough-wide community, Rotherham can seek for every child to have a good childhood, and work together to give every child the best start in life, and to support the development of the next generation of citizens.
- 2.7 It is suggested that such a strategy be developed around the following principles that will enable children to thrive: a focus on the rights and voice of the child; keeping children safe and healthy; ensuring children reach their potential; an inclusive borough; harnessing the resources of communities; and a sense of place.

3. Key Issues

3.1 A focus on the rights and voice of the child

- 3.1.1 Children and young people are the next generation of citizens. To ensure a focus on the voice and rights of the child there needs to be a commitment to the inclusion of children and young people in decisions that affect them. This enables young people to be active in local democracy. It also requires an asset-based, strengths-focused approach to children and young people, which recognises when behaviours do not meet the expected standards.
- 3.1.2 A commitment to developing the voice and rights of the child in Rotherham also requires the Council to consider how it connects to children and young people via the digital world, using the communication currencies with which young people participate in their lives. It also requires a commitment to children's rights, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989.

3.2 Keeping children safe and healthy

- 3.2.1 Fundamental to ambitions for a Child-Centred Borough is that all Rotherham children should be safe. Following the Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, looked after children, care leavers and review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (October 2014), Rotherham Council has established an Improvement Programme to act on the recommendations within the Inspection report, and those from Professor Jay's Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, findings of Louise Casey's Corporate Governance Inspection (CGI); and address the systemic improvement needed internally within RMBC Children and Young People Services and across our partnership structures to safeguard our children and young people. Progress has been made against the early priorities, and focus is now on sustained improvements and embedding high quality services. This is particularly true of the experiences and outcomes of Rotherham's children in care population where much improvement is

still required before the council can be satisfied it is being a good 'Corporate Parent'.

- 3.2.2 Rotherham's Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough, also has some ambitious visions for local children and young people, including: giving every child the best start in life; improving emotional health and wellbeing for children and young people; improving health outcomes for children and young people through integrated commissioning and service delivery; and ensuring children and young people are healthier and happier.
- 3.2.3 Ambitions for a Child-Centred Borough can support achievement of these objectives for children and young people by seeking to nurture confidence, self-worth and resilience in the next generation of citizens.

3.3 Ensuring children reach their potential

- 3.3.1 To ensure children in Rotherham can thrive, become active and productive citizens, and fulfil their potential, a Child-Centred Borough can support children to have the highest possible level of education, access to training and learning, businesses, universities, apprenticeships, work experience, work opportunities; and training in enterprise. In particular, the Council can support children in its own care to be the best they can be by using its own resources, and its influence to secure better outcomes and opportunities, such as apprenticeships for care leavers, and young people who are looked after. This is just one example of something tangible that could be done for children in care to support them into adulthood.
- 3.3.2 Children can be supported to be school ready through the vital role of parents, and the role of Rotherham's public services in supporting parents to be the best they can be. As a civic leader, the Council can support where it is needed, and support and challenge our partners regarding their role in ensuring children are school ready. The digital literacy of children in Rotherham can be prioritised, to prepare them for the jobs of the future – the code clubs in libraries are a good example currently in Rotherham which can be built on. Plentiful out of school activities available for all children that combine fun, freedom and creativity, such as those provided by libraries, including the summer reading challenge can provide positive diversionary activities.

3.4 An inclusive borough

- 3.4.1 Underpinned by an Equalities Strategy, which is currently under development, a Child-Centred Borough can support improved services for vulnerable children, ensuring that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background. This can include fewer exclusions from school, stronger support for children with special needs and disabilities and using transport developments to strengthen the accessibility of support and services.
- 3.4.2 In particular, the role of the 'Corporate Parent' can be promoted within the Council and beyond, to increase contributions to the development of Rotherham's looked after children. This should include the promotion of fostering, development of apprenticeships within the Council for care leavers, and provision of high quality housing for young people leaving care.
- 3.4.3 It is important that, given the intended impact on the place, over generations, stakeholders across all age groups are involved in shaping the services which will translate the ambition for Child-Centred Borough into reality.

3.5 Harnessing the resources of communities

- 3.5.1 Children are citizens of the future, and a Child-Centred Borough is an investment for the future of the population of Rotherham as a whole. It can support the engagement of children and young people and families in inter-generational community projects, seeking to solve established local problems, particularly through repeated activities that inspire a deeper attachment. This can be developed around elected members in the local community, as the elected representative. For example, toddler groups could be held in care homes, or young volunteers could run luncheon clubs for isolated older people.
- 3.5.2 A Child-Centred Borough can facilitate a commitment to working together with local people, including children and young people, on all major developments, including planning decisions, as part of the democratic process of the Council.

3.6 A sense of place

- 3.6.1 As part of a Child-Centred Borough, children in Rotherham can have access to a mix of creativity and culture, including the arts and local heritage. These embed a sense of pride, knowledge and insight into the town which has nurtured them. Examples can include: heritage activities by schools, both in the classroom and in heritage settings such as museums,

archives and exhibitions, run by the Council and Community Groups; investment in knowledge of Rotherham history and heritage for Rotherham teachers and workers engaged with children; and easy access by children and families to the wealth of Rotherham's treasures, including Clifton Park Museum, York and Lancaster Regimental Museum, Rotherham Archives and Local Studies, Boston Castle and other heritage sites. Such examples would support the development of the next generation.

- 3.6.2 Children and young people growing up in a Child-Centred Borough can be proud ambassadors for Rotherham, surrounded by positive messages about Rotherham's achievements and potential, and supported to become proud Rotherham citizens in adulthood.

3.7 Measuring the success of a Child-Centred Borough

- 3.7.1 The Council undertakes an annual survey, which provides a unique insight into the lived experience of children and young people in Rotherham. The Lifestyle Survey is carried out with young people in year 7 and year 10 in Rotherham secondary schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRU). The survey covers a range of issues for local young people including healthy eating, sport and exercise, aspirations, and feeling safe. The Lifestyle Survey report for 2015 is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.7.2 The data from the 2015 Lifestyle Survey provides a benchmark for measuring the success of Rotherham as a Child-Centred Borough over future years, as it provides the opportunity to track changes in the experience, ambitions, behaviours and feelings of local children and young people. Information about trend analysis from previous years' data is included as Appendix 2.
- 3.7.3 A few Local Authorities carry out a similar survey. Contact has been made with Sheffield City Council and Leeds City Council who both undertake a very similar survey. Information will be able to be exchanged with the councils to enable a benchmarking exercise to compare results.
- 3.7.4 The national 'What About Youth Survey' was undertaken at a similar time last year and similar questions will be included in the Rotherham survey to allow for a direct comparison in future.
- 3.7.5 Introducing new measures to gauge the involvement of adult community stakeholders from a variety of sectors, in the development of services to ensure that Rotherham is a place where families thrive.

- 3.7.6 Learning from previous years' Lifestyle Survey data, which has enabled a number of improvements, including:

3.8 Food And Drink

- 3.8.1 Children's Weight Management Services were retendered and new providers commenced last year which included services for 4 to 17 year olds
- 3.8.2 Schools have campaigned to stop the sale of high calorie and high sugar content snacks.
- 3.8.3 The sale of high caffeine drinks was reduced in schools. The percentage of young people reporting that they do not drink energy drinks has increased from 41% in 2013 to 55% in 2015.

3.9 Mental Health

- 3.9.1 The 'My Mind Matters' website launched offering support, advice and guidance to young people and their parents.
- 3.9.2 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) distributed tools and coping strategies to all secondary schools.
- 3.9.3 Information provided to young people and schools around suicide and self-harm awareness.

3.10 Feeling Safe

- 3.10.1 The South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) (Bus Station) updated information on their websites and put in place reporting mechanisms.
- 3.10.2 Personal, Health and Social Education (PHSE) sessions have been run with colleagues from the SYPTTE around feeling safe. The Lifestyle Survey for 2015 shows that more young people feel safe in Rotherham.

3.11 Smoking

- 3.11.1 A campaign has been held in all secondary schools to promote non-smoking.
- 3.11.2 Trading Standards have issued warnings to local shops who sold tobacco to young people. The Lifestyle Survey reports that more young people are reporting that they do not smoke in 2015 than in 2014.

3.12 Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness

3.12.1 A total of 3,852 Rotherham learners attended Chelsea's Choice awareness sessions in schools. 98% report that they are better informed about child sexual exploitation as a result.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 This report has described the ambition for a Child-Centred Borough as one that starts by declaring that Rotherham wants every child to have a positive start in life and a good childhood so they can grow into well adjusted, emotionally resilient individuals who will enjoy healthy and mutually respectful relationships in adulthood, become responsible citizens and be able to be good parents to their own children when the time comes. The first group of children who must benefit from the following proposal must be the children who are in the care of the council and for whom the council are the 'Corporate Parents'.
- 4.2 The proposal makes recommendations about how as a Borough-wide community, Rotherham can translate the ambitions into a tangible reality. The approach will seek for every child, including children in the care of the Council, to have a good childhood, and work together to give every child the best start in life, and to support the development of the next generation of citizens.
- 4.3 The paper sets an aspiration for a Child-Centred Borough around the following six principles: a focus on the rights and voice of the child; keeping children safe and healthy; ensuring children reach their potential; an inclusive borough; harnessing the resources of communities; and a sense of place.
- 4.4 It is therefore recommended that the ambition to become a Child-Centred Borough is endorsed, and that the six principles of the ambition are approved.
- 4.5 To ensure that actions are developed to achieve the priorities for a Child-Centred Borough, and measure impact, it is also recommended that a member-led working group be established, with progress reports to Cabinet at regular intervals.
- 4.6 The annual Rotherham Lifestyle Survey provides a unique benchmark for measuring the future impact of the Child-Centred Borough ambitions from the perspective of local children and young people. It is therefore recommended that the 2015 Lifestyle Survey results (attached as Appendix 1) are published and is undertaken again with schools in 2016.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 As part of the Community Strategy consultation in 2016, consultation will be undertaken with children and young people regarding how Rotherham becomes a Child-Centred Borough. Furthermore, the

establishment of a member-led working group can include the participation of members of the Youth Council, Looked After Children's Council and Young Inspectors team in its design and purpose to ensure the voice of young people.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 It is proposed that the journey toward the new ambitions commences from June 2016.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 None identified.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 Officer time to implement the Child-Centred Borough Programme would be sourced from existing Council resources.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 The Child-Centred Borough Programme would seek for every child to have a good childhood, and for all partners to work together to give every child the best start in life, and to support the development of the next generation of citizens.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 The Child-Centred Borough Programme would support the community of Rotherham to develop and demonstrate a commitment to the rights of the child, in fulfilment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 The Programme would require commitment and involvement from across Council departments and the broader community of organisations in Rotherham.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 None identified at this stage

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Ian Thomas, Strategic Director of Children's Services

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- None

Director of Legal Services:- None

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