

**Council Report**

Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Makers Meeting – 11 July 2016

**Title**

Phase Two RMBC Corporate Improvement Plan

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

Non-Key Decision, included on Forward Plan for decision on 11<sup>th</sup> July or later

**Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive

**Report author(s):**

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**Ward(s) Affected**

All (Corporate Policy)

**Executive Summary**

1. As part of the Secretary of State Directions on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015 appointing Commissioners to Rotherham MBC, there was a requirement for the Commissioners to agree an improvement plan with Government within three months of their appointment. This led to the publication of the 'Fresh Start' Corporate Improvement Plan, which covered key improvement priorities for the Council over a two year period from May 2015 to May 2017. This Plan was endorsed by Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015, prior to its formal submission to Secretaries of State on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015.
2. The Fresh Start Plan was divided into two phases, the first to May 2016, focusing on establishing the core building blocks of an effective local authority. There were a total of 132 identified actions within this first phase, the delivery of which has been overseen by a Joint Board of Commissioners and Elected Members (including the Council Leader and Leader of the Opposition Group). The second phase, from May 2016, focuses on embedding strong leadership and a new culture "where the improvements made are embedded via revitalised political and managerial leadership which can deliver an aspirational and inspirational vision for a better Rotherham".
3. It was always the case that the outline actions for the second phase set out in the original Fresh Start document would need to be re-considered in the light of the experience of Phase One.

4. A draft set of Phase Two objectives and actions was therefore considered at the most recent Joint Board meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016. This reflected a number of ongoing priority actions, a number of actions in the first phase that had not yet been completed, as well as a re-assessed set of outline Phase Two actions from the original document. The Joint Board signed off this Phase Two Plan to form a key focus of targeted improvement activity through to May 2017, and a copy is enclosed at **Appendix A**.
5. The Joint Board will continue to oversee the performance and delivery of the Phase Two plan at its monthly meetings, with the Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team and Assistant Directors collectively responsible for progress reporting to the Board.

### **Recommendations**

Cabinet is asked to:

- Provide its endorsement of the Phase Two RMBC Corporate Improvement Plan (enclosed at Appendix A).

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix A – Phase Two RMBC Corporate Improvement Plan

### **Background Papers/Information**

RMBC “Fresh Start” Corporate Improvement Plan (2015-2017), 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Report to Council on the RMBC “Fresh Start” Corporate Improvement Plan (2015-2017), 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015

Secretary of State Directions to Rotherham MBC, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015; and revised Directions, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015

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

Possibility of pre-scrutiny consideration prior to Cabinet (1<sup>st</sup> July 2016)

### **Council Approval Required**

Yes

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

No

## **Title (Main report)**

### Phase Two RMBC Corporate Improvement Plan

#### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 For Cabinet provide its endorsement of the Phase Two RMBC Corporate Improvement Plan (enclosed at Appendix A).

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 As part of the Secretary of State Directions in February 2015 appointing Commissioners to Rotherham MBC, there was a specific requirement for the Managing Director Commissioner to lead on the establishment of a corporate improvement plan for the Council and agree this with Government within three months of their appointment.
- 2.2 This led to the publication of the ‘Fresh Start’ Corporate Improvement Plan, which covered key improvement priorities for the Council over a two year period from May 2015 to May 2017. This Plan was endorsed by Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2015, prior to its formal submission to the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government and Education on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2015. It was established as the “sister plan” to the targeted Children’s Services Improvement Board Action Plan, driving specific improvements with regard to the Council’s children’s social care services and overseen by the Children’s Social Care Commissioner.
- 2.3 The Fresh Start Plan was divided into two phases, the first to May 2016, focusing on establishing the core building blocks of an effective local authority. There were a total of 132 identified actions within this first phase, the delivery of which has been overseen by a Joint Board<sup>1</sup> of Commissioners and Elected Members (including the Council Leader and Leader of the Opposition Group). A provisional set of 21 actions were also highlighted in the original document as likely focuses of Phase Two, subject to further consideration.
- 2.4 The Joint Board’s most recent meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2016 considered a provisional final progress report on the Phase One Improvement Plan actions, which noted that, in total, 84% (108) of the actions had been assessed by action leads as substantively completed to the required timescales or standards.
- 2.5 In terms of the key achievements and progress achieved in the first phase of corporate Improvement Plan’s delivery, a number of these were set out within the Commissioners’ 12-month report to Government, on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015<sup>2</sup> (specifically within Appendix A of that report). These included:
- i. **Agreeing and recruiting to the new senior management structure of the Council.** This new structure was first agreed in principle at the Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2015 and was subject to a rolling recruitment process from that point. All of the most senior appointments have now been

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<sup>1</sup> Public records of all Joint Board meetings are published on the Council website at [www.rotherham.gov.uk/info/200009/performance/998/see\\_our\\_plan\\_to\\_improve\\_rotherham/2](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/info/200009/performance/998/see_our_plan_to_improve_rotherham/2)

<sup>2</sup> For copies of all published Commissioner progress reports to Government see [www.rotherham.gov.uk/homepage/351/commissioners\\_progress\\_reviews](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/homepage/351/commissioners_progress_reviews)

confirmed (with the final Strategic Director for Adult Care and Housing due to take up their role in August 2016).

- ii. **Consulting citizens, businesses and partners on a new vision for Rotherham**, through the successful delivery of an ambitious programme of public and partner consultation workshops from May to September 2015, which engaged around 1,800 people. The results were presented in a final “Views from Rotherham” report<sup>3</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015).
- iii. **Agreeing with partner agencies the foundation of a new, expanded local strategic partnership for Rotherham** – the Rotherham Together Partnership – to enable the Council to work more effectively with other public services (health, police, fire), businesses, the community and voluntary sector, colleges and nearby universities. The expanded and reconstituted partnership met for the first time on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2015 and published its first 12-month collective action plan on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The Partnership is now leading work on the establishment of a new Community Strategy for Rotherham, from early 2017.
- iv. **A re-invigorated Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB)**, with new Chair and Vice Chair arrangements, which has also agreed a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the borough.
- v. **Strengthened links between the Children and Young People’s Partnership and HWB, with the Adult and Children’s Safeguarding Boards**. New Independent Chairs have been appointed to the two Rotherham safeguarding boards, with scheduled liaison meetings; and will attend the HWB, for example to present Annual Reports and relevant strategies (e.g. the report of the Children’s Safeguarding Board was presented to the HWB in January 2016).
- vi. **Finalising a programme of peer service review health checks** in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA) - for the service areas of housing, waste, planning, 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. The findings and recommendations are now informing service-level improvement work, in many cases led by new Strategic and Assistant Director over-sight.
- vii. **Governance arrangements and transformation programme agreed for Adult services modernisation**. Radical change to these services is now well 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**, which were increased from 60% to 96% of the workforce (covering 4,146 of 4,319 members of staff) by September 2015; with an audit carried out to check on their quality.

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<sup>3</sup> Available on the Council’s website at [www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/download/240/tell\\_us\\_your\\_views\\_on\\_rotherham\\_consultation](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/download/240/tell_us_your_views_on_rotherham_consultation)

- ix. **Report produced on different governance models** – a member task and finish group has produced a final draft Governance Review report, which helped shape the Council’s developing approach to governance and decision making from the 2016/17 municipal year (including the new “pre-scrutiny” arrangements).
  - xi. **Improved financial management** with a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) agreed at the Council meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2016 which provides a better basis upon which to deliver long term priorities and plans and address the service transformation and savings needed to deliver effective services over the next three years (and beyond).
  - xiii. **Council’s 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 reflecting the further consideration of the new Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet.
  - xiv. **New Member Code of Conduct** – developed by a Standards Committee Working Group, supported by a supplementary local code, which set 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 and a new Risk Management Policy & Strategy has been agreed, underpinned by revised Strategic and Directorate risk registers.
  - xvi. **More proactive and strategic use of Assistant Directors and “M3” (middle managers) groups to discuss key policy, operation and improvement related issues.** The use of these groups to share information and explore issues has become an established way of doing business at the Council.
- 2.6 In light of the end of the first phase of Improvement Plan activity, therefore, the Joint Board meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May also considered a draft Phase Two corporate improvement action plan. 24 specific actions or milestones from Phase One were identified as areas of ongoing focus within the Phase Two period. These reflected a mix of actions that had always had an extended delivery period into the second year of activity; or where the Joint Board had agreed previously should be extended into Phase Two. In addition there were some activities that had not been delivered within the expected timeframes of Phase One and were required by the Board to continue to be monitored into the second phase.

### 3. Key issues – Phase Two Improvement Plan

- 3.1 In light of the Joint Board’s consideration, enclosed at **Appendix A** is the outline Phase Two RMBC Corporate Improvement Plan. This remains a live document, which will be kept under review, but the objectives, actions and milestones/standards contained within it have now been agreed by the Joint Board as a key basis for corporate improvement activity during 2016/17. For

each objective and action commentary is provided within the Plan to explain how these track back to the original, 'Fresh Start' document.

3.2 The Phase Two Plan represents the ongoing contract between the Council, Commissioners and central Government in terms of embedding the behaviours and practices of an effective council. It also sets out the changing context at RMBC since the original 'Fresh Start' document was published in May 2015, in particular the restoration of some decision making powers to the authority from February 2016 in reflection of some of the improvements that have been achieved to date. This Phase Two Plan will continue to support the evidence base that Commissioners and the Secretaries of State need to consider in terms of the restoration of further powers to the Council, in due course.

3.3 In total, 20 improvement objectives are set out, with numerous underpinning actions, milestones and/or standards to achieve. These objectives again mirror the four key improvement themes set out in the original 'Fresh Start' document, namely:

A: Inspirational Political and Managerial Leadership

B: Robust Governance, Decision-making and Performance Management

C: Culture of excellence and outstanding implementation

D: Strong, high impact partnerships

3.4 Monitoring of progress will continue to be reported on a monthly basis to the Joint Board of Commissioners and Elected Members, established in Phase One. There will be, however, an enhanced focus on narrative-based reporting in this second phase, reflecting the fewer number but more cross-cutting nature of the objectives; and that the focus of Phase Two is on embedding better practice and organisational change. There will be a key emphasis, led by the Council's Senior Leadership Team working with Assistant Directors, on ensuring all milestones and measures are kept under constant review via the named, accountable Strategic Leads and co-ordinating Action Owners, working alongside Elected Members and Commissioners.

3.5 There will also be a renewed focus in Phase Two on direct engagement with the Council's wider senior and middle management in the governance process, with the Senior Leadership Team collectively responsible for its effective delivery, and supported by a corporate officer group made up of Assistant Directors (and other specific action leads).

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

4.1 Cabinet is asked to formally provide its endorsement for the Phase Two RMBC Corporate Improvement Plan, to help demonstrate the Council's organisational commitment to ongoing improvement activity in response to the original 'Fresh Start' document.

#### **5. Consultation**

5.1 The Phase Two action plan represents the continuation of the two-year Corporate Improvement Plan that was consulted on and approved by Council

and also the Secretary of States for Communities & Local Government and Education in May 2015.

- 5.2 The specific objectives, actions and milestones within the re-assessed second phase have also been subject to consultation with Commissioners and Elected Members represented on the Joint Board governance arrangements, as well as the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Detailed consultation and consideration of the Phase Two Plan has also taken place with the Assistant Directors group, which will work collectively alongside the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team to ensure delivery of the actions within it.
- 5.3 The Council's Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team, working with Elected Members, have also already taken a range of steps to engage with the wider organisation on this second phase of the Improvement Plan. This has included the direct briefing by the Leader and Chief Executive of around 850 Council staff, including those in front-line roles; and workshops with "M3" (middle) managers to both understand and help shape the content of the Phase Two Plan. Cabinet Member and SLT-led briefings are also being scheduled to take place in Directorates during the spring and summer of 2016, which will complement management and wider workforce engagement and development activity.

## **6. Timetable and accountability for implementing this decision**

- 6.1 The delivery of the Phase Two Plan will continue to be monitored by the established Joint Board governance arrangements, on an ongoing basis. The monthly meeting of the Joint Board will receive regular performance updates. Further details of these governance arrangements are set out in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 above.
- 6.2 It is also anticipated that the progress being achieved through the implementation of the Phase Two plan will continue to be an issue that the Council's Audit Committee will wish to scrutinise (as it did in Phase One), as an example of an ongoing external audit/inspection process, alongside other such external audits/inspections.

## **7. Financial and procurement implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct costs associated with the implementation of the Phase Two Corporate Improvement Plan as this will continue to be delivered via existing governance arrangements and current resources.
- 7.2 Many of the actions within the Phase Two Plan itself continue to be cost neutral. However, the Plan does include a particular focus on further improvements and activity required to ensure the Council can continue to deliver a balanced budget in future years, through an ongoing focus on the successful implementation (and further review) of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, the Phase Two Plan highlights continuing work on an external review of the Council's procurement function and to establish more effective commissioning arrangements.

## **8. Legal implications**

8.1 The Phase Two action plan represents the continuation of work to deliver the 'Fresh Start' Corporate Improvement Plan developed by the Council in response to the Secretary of State legal Directions of 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015; and later revised on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016 in the light of the restoration of some decision making powers to the authority. These Directions are made under section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 and section 497(4B) of the Education Act 1996.

## **9. Equalities and human rights implications**

9.1 The Council is under a duty to promote equality and diversity in all the work it does and the services it delivers. A key focus of the Phase Two Corporate Improvement Plan is to continue the focus on improving the Council's understanding and approach towards its equalities duties and responsibilities. This includes through the establishment of a new Corporate Equalities and Diversity Policy, as well as an accompanying strategy to help embed this improved focus across Council service areas and in work with the Council's external partners.

## **10. Implications for partners and other directorates**

10.1 Key statutory partners will continue to be briefed on progress with the delivery of the Corporate Improvement Plan and the specific content of the second phase.

10.2 The Phase Two Plan itself also includes a focus on embedding more effective partnership working, following the establishment of a revised and expanded Rotherham Together Partnership in Phase One. A key priority in this regard in Phase Two will be the Partnership leading a process to devise and agree a new Community Strategy for Rotherham by early 2017, which will articulate a collective vision and commitment for all partners to work together to achieve a better Rotherham for residents, businesses and visitors.

## **11. Risks and mitigation**

11.1 The 20 discrete improvement objectives within the Phase Two Plan will be subject to more detailed delivery plans, co-ordinated by the relevant action leads and owned by the accountable leads at SLT level. These will link directly to the progress reporting arrangements to the Joint Board and will include explicit assessments of key risks to delivery and mitigating measures required and in place. Where any such risk may be regarded as particularly significant for the Council, the Plan's governance arrangements - through Assistant Directors, SLT and the Joint Board - will help ensure that these are escalated to either Directorate or the Corporate Risk Register, where appropriate.

## **12. Accountable officer(s)**

Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive



Approvals Obtained from:

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services: Stuart Booth, Assistant Director, Financial Services

Director of Legal Services: Dermot Pearson, Assistant Director, Legal Services

Head of Procurement (if appropriate): Interim Corporate Procurement Manager

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