

COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday, 13th July, 2016

Present:- Councillor Lyndsay Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Albiston, Allcock, Allen, Andrews, Atkin, Beck, Bird, Brookes, Councillor Maggi Clark, Cooksey, Cowles, Cusworth, Elliot, M. Elliott, R. Elliott, Ellis, Fenwick-Green, Finnie, Hague, Hoddinott, Ireland, Jarvis, Jones, Rose, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Mallinder, Marles, Napper, Price, Read, Reeder, Roche, Rushforth, Russell, Sansome, Senior, Sheppard, Short, Simpson, Steele, Taylor, John Turner, Julie Turner, Walsh, Watson, Williams, Wilson and Wyatt.

18. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following report to the meeting:

“Early on in Office I attended a Mosque for the first time for a MacMillan Coffee morning and they welcomed me with open arms and it was an experience I shall remember for ever.

I have visited a number of schools, many primary schools and schools have visited us here in the town Hall.

Another highlight since taking Office was the Armed Forces Day where I was asked to inspect the troops and the Freedom of the Borough parade which was truly amazing and well attended by all members of the public.

Sadly since taking up office there have also been some sad occasions. I attended a vigil for the Orlando shooting and to mark the sad death of Jo Cox.

There have been many commemorative services which I have attended in relation to the 100 years since the Battle of the Somme. I have laid many wreaths and shed many more tears.

I would like to ask Members of the Council to join me in one minute’s silence to commemorate Jo Cox and the sad shootings in Orlando.”

The Council rose for a moment of silent reflection the death of Jo Cox MP, Member of Parliament for Batley and Spennings, who was murdered on 16 June 2016.

The Mayor presented certificates of Commendation from the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police to officers who had been involved in the investigation of a high profile CSE case under Operation Clover. On behalf of the Council, the Mayor conveyed sincere thanks and gratitude to Mark Batterley, Rosemary Fern, Becci Hall and Kerry Timmins.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chief Executive submitted apologies for absence from Councillors Beaumont, Buckley, B. Cutts, D. Cutts, Evans, Jepson, Marriott, Roddison, Tweed, Whysall and Yasseen.

20. PETITIONS

The Chief Executive reported that three petitions had been submitted but had not met the threshold for consideration by Council, and would be referred to the relevant directorate for a response to be prepared. The petitions concerned:

- Contained 17 signatures from residents of Viking Way/Danby Road sheltered bungalow community regarding the anti-social behaviour towards other residents in the bungalow complex by an occupant.
- Contained 5 signatures from residents of Montgomery Square, Wath seeking the eviction of a Council tenant at Montgomery Square due to alleged nuisance and anti-social behaviour.
- Contained 91 individuals seeking the eviction of a Council tenant at Sorrel Sykes Close, due to anti-social behaviour and criminal activity

21. COMMUNICATIONS

No communications had been received.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were made at the meeting.

23. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETING**Resolved:-**

That the minutes of the annual meeting of the Council held on 20 May 2016, be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

24. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

From Mr. M. Eyre stated "The newly proposed HS2 route will affect the areas of Thurcroft, Ulley, Swallownest, Treeton and Catcliffe in terms of noise pollution and disruption. What will this Council and the Ward Councillors do to ensure the views of the people are heard and respected?"

Councillor Lelliott responded: "HS2 Ltd announced the option of a new route through Sheffield City Region last week on Thursday 7th July. The newly proposed route is available on the Government website for all to view. There are 2 main changes to the previous route, which are:-

1. A spur from the main HS2 line through Chesterfield and into Sheffield Midland Station using "High Speed classic Compatible Trains"; with the potential for this to continue through to Rotherham and Barnsley.
2. That the high speed main line be moved further east; which means some areas on the previous route will be less affected (such as at Catcliffe, Treeton and Waverley) with other areas more affected (such as Wales, Aston, Thurcroft, Bramley and Ravenfield)

It is very important that the Council and Ward Members support people and businesses potentially affected by the new route and that we engage fully in the consultation process.

A number of information events have been organised by HS2 Ltd for later on in July 2016, especially aimed at communities affected by the revised route. In Rotherham the following events are planned:-

- Friday 22 July at Bramley Village Hall; 12:30 – 8:00pm
- Tuesday 26 July at Aston Parish Council Village Hall; 12:30 – 8:00pm

In addition, and especially for Members and the community in the north of the Borough and the Dearne Valley there is also an engagement event within the Doncaster area which may be of interest, this is on Tuesday 19 July at Mexborough Resource Centre; 12 pm – 7.00pm

HS2 Ltd advise they will launch the formal consultation process in the Autumn of 2016; following this a decision on the final route will be one for the Government to make."

25. MINUTES OF CABINET AND COMMISSIONERS' DECISION MAKING MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meetings held on 26th May and 6th June, 2016 be received.

26. 2016-17 ROTHERHAM MBC CORPORATE PLAN

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval of the 2016/17 Corporate Plan for Rotherham MBC, in accordance with the commitment within the Phase Two Corporate Improvement Plan.

It was reported that the Council approved this initial version of the Corporate Plan in December 2015 in the understanding that further work would be required in order to refine a finalised Corporate Plan, with this

work led by the new Chief Executive and senior management working with the newly appointed Cabinet following the local elections in May 2016.

The 2016/17 Corporate Plan represented the core document that would underpin the Council's overall vision, setting out headline priorities, indicators and measures that would demonstrate its delivery.

Resolved:-

That the 2016/17 Corporate Plan be approved.

27. CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval of the Corporate Safeguarding Policy for approval following its endorsement by Cabinet on 11 July 2016

It was reported that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy was part of a new suite of documents which would underpin the Council's 2016/17 Corporate Plan. The policy set out the Council's commitment to promoting safeguarding across the whole organisation and detailed the roles and responsibilities expected of every employee and specific services, as well as councillors.

It was noted that the policy would act as a resource for all employees working for Council and all councillors; supporting understanding of what safeguarding means and what to do in relation to safeguarding concerns.

It was noted that Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had reviewed the report at its meeting on 1 July 2016 and had recommended that political groups be instructed to mandate their members to undertake relevant training on safeguarding matters.

Resolved:

1. That the Corporate Safeguarding Policy be approved.
2. That the political groups of the Council be instructed to mandate their Members to undertake relevant training on safeguarding matters (including options for e-learning).

28. ROTHERHAM MBC CORPORATE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Consideration was given to a report which sought approval of the revised corporate RMBC Equality and Diversity Policy, which had been recommended by the Cabinet at its meeting on 11 July 2016

It was reported that the corporate "Fresh Start" Improvement Plan included specific actions to re-establish a clear vision, values and strategic direction for the entire council in relation to equalities and diversity issues. Phase Two of the Improvement Plan committed the Council to ensuring that the authority's Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy would be reviewed with a new, revised policy in place by July 2016.

It was noted that the policy itself would help to ensure that the Council was compliant with its statutory equalities duties and work on a wider, strategic approach to equality and diversity issues was being developed. It was further noted that responsibility for equalities and diversity issues must not be seen as something that rested only at the corporate centre of the council, but rather should be embedded within all that the Council does, supported through the performance management process.

Resolved:-

That the revised corporate RMBC Equality and Diversity Policy be approved

29. REVIEW OF WARD BOUNDARIES AND THE SIZE OF THE COUNCIL

Consideration was given to a report which set out the requirements of a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in respect of Rotherham's local government ward boundaries.

It was noted that the LGBCE would visit Rotherham to meet with elected members, group leaders, appropriate officers and representatives from local parish and town councils to explain how the review would work and detail the challenging timetable for the review.

It was reported that it was necessary for the Council to identify how it would work with the LGBCE to undertake the review and the paper proposed an approach and decision-making timetable to accord with the review timetable set out by the LGBCE. It was recommended that the work be led by the Constitution Working Group given that the outcome of the boundary review will determine the number of elected members and the arrangements for warding which would then form the foundation for the Council's decision making processes.

Resolved:-

1. That the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's timetable for the boundary review for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council be noted.
2. That the Constitution Working Group be authorised to make representations in respect of the optimum size of membership of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to the Council's Chief Executive.

3. That the Chief Executive be authorised to submit a draft submission on the optimum size of membership of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in the light of the representations received from the Constitution Working Group.
4. That a report be brought to the next meeting of Council to enable Council to approve a final submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission on the optimum size of membership of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

30. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Consideration was given to a report which presented the final draft of the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2015-16 for approval, having been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 1 July 2016.

It was noted that the scrutiny work programme, as outlined in the annual report, helped to achieve the authority's corporate priorities by addressing key policy and performance agendas and the outcomes focused on added value to the work of the Council.

Resolved:-

1. That the Scrutiny Annual Report 2015-16 be approved for publication.
2. That the amended membership details for 2016-17 be reflected in the final published version.
3. That the Our work programme in 2016-17 section be updated accordingly following the work planning meeting on 8 July 2016.

31. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2016-17 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Consideration was given to the draft Calendar of Meetings for the 2016-17 municipal year, which had been submitted for approval.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board indicated that it would be necessary to include additional meetings of that committee in order to undertake the high workload which was anticipated throughout the year.

Resolved:-

That, subject to the inclusion of additional dates for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, the Calendar of Meetings for the 2016-17 municipal year be approved.

32. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS' TO COMMITTEES, PANELS AND BODIES

The following appointments by the UK Independence Party Group were noted:-

Audit Committee	Councillor Cowles
Licensing Board	Councillors Finnie, Hague, Napper and Reeder
Licensing Committee	Councillors Hague, Finnie and Napper
Planning Board	Councillors D. Cutts, M. Elliott and John Turner
Standards & Ethics Committee	Councillors R. Elliott and Finnie
Overview & Scrutiny Management Board	Councillors Cowles, Short and Julie Turner
Health Select Commission	Councillors R. Elliott, Marriott, Short and John Turner
Improving Lives Select Commission	Councillors Hague, Marriott, Napper and Short
Improving Places Select Commission	Councillors B. Cutts, Reeder & Julie Turner
RMBC Trade Unions Joint Consultative Committee	Councillor Napper

It was also noted that, in accordance with the requirement to apply political balance to appointment of Vice-Chairs to Overview and Scrutiny Select Commissions, the UK Independence Party had nominated Councillor Allen Cowles as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Councillor Peter Short as Vice-Chair of the Health Select Commission.

The recently approved appointments of councillors to outside bodies by Commissioner Myers was submitted to the meeting for information.

Resolved:

1. That the appointments of the UK Independence Party group be noted.

2. That the appointment of Councillor Allen Cowles as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Councillor Peter Short as Vice-Chair of the Health Select Commission be noted.
3. That the schedule of appointments of councillors to serve on outside bodies for the 2016/17 municipal year, which had been approved by Commissioner Myers, be noted.
4. That Councillor Cusworth be appointed to the Fostering Panel.

33. NOTICE OF MOTION - SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

Moved by Councillor Hoddinott and seconded by Councillor Senior:

This Council notes :

- High-quality sex and relationships education helps create safe school communities where pupils can grow, learn, and develop positive, healthy behaviour for life.
- There is a growing body of support for this view from voluntary organisations and charities like NSPCC and Brook, the Department of Education and Ofsted.
- Ofsted inspections have found that, despite progress across the country, SRE needs improving in one third of schools. They are clear that this lack of quality SRE leaves pupils vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Ofsted, 2013)
- Although the council does not have any control over the school curriculum, we can't ignore this issue in our schools. In a YouGov poll - one in three 16 to 18-year-old girls said they experienced unwanted sexual touching/'groping' at school.
- The pressures on our young people are growing with new technology. In a ChildLine survey of 13 to 18-year-olds, 60% said they had been asked for a sexual image or video of themselves

This Council believes:

- That every child in Rotherham should receive age-appropriate sex and relationship education.
- That specific training should be provided to those delivering sex and relationship education so it is high quality and issues like child exploitation are understood.
- That young boys need specific support and education around healthy relationships, in the face of online pornography.
- That Rotherham schools are an instrumental setting in ensuring this happens.

This Council therefore resolves:

- To call on the government to introduce compulsory sex and relationship education for all children.

- To write to all primary, secondary and special schools in Rotherham to encourage them to have a comprehensive curriculum with regards to raising awareness of grooming and abuse; as well as education about healthy relationships.
- That schools welcome evaluation and review of what they provide, and best practice is shared.
- That schools are requested to reinstate the contribution to the Child Sexual Exploitation team that they removed last year.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried unanimously by the Council.

34. STANDARDS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Resolved:-

That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Standards and Ethics Committee be adopted.

35. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Resolved:-

That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Audit Committee be adopted.

36. HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Resolved:-

That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board be adopted.

37. PLANNING BOARD

Resolved:-

That the reports and minutes of the meetings of the Planning Board be adopted.

38. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSONS

There were none.

39. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS AND CHAIRMEN

Councillor Simpson asked, "Can the Council publicly condemn hate crimes, especially those that are racist and xenophobic? As they have no place in a modern, independent Great Britain."

In response, the Leader of the Council stated that the Council could publicly condemn all hate crimes and was committed to working with all communities, business and public service organisations to tackle such crime.

Rotherham Council was working in partnership with South Yorkshire Police to encourage people to report hate crime and to send the message that it would not be tolerated, whether on the grounds of race, religion, disability, sexuality or trans identity. South Yorkshire Police had issued recent press and social media communications to encourage anyone who had experienced or witnessed hate crime to report it. The Council's Community Safety Unit was supporting that message with practical actions, such as providing information at community meetings and conferences, for example, at the Rotherham Tenants Conference on 5 July. The Safer Rotherham Partnership had also supported community projects to tackle hate crime including increasing third party reporting centres through the engagement of community and voluntary sector organisations

All parts of the community must stand united against all forms of violence and anyone with information or concerns about hate crime should report this to police so it can be investigated.

The Council was supporting the 'Love Is Louder' initiative, led by Rotherham Ethnic Minorities Alliance to show that Love is Louder than intolerance and hate. The Mayor was due to launch the project on 18 July to celebrate the art work created by community groups and individuals in Rotherham that will be used to "artbomb" the town centre and other locations in the Borough.

Councillor Julie Turner asked "Towards the end of last year in different meetings we were told by three different councillors that footfall in the town centre increased. Officially, last year, did footfall within the town centre increase or decrease?"

Councillor Lelliot, Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy responded "Last year footfall decreased by 4.7% which could be as a consequence of the number of far right marches/demonstrations that have taken place. Since 2010 there has been an overall 6% increase in footfall."

Councillor Reeder asked "For some time now I understand that a comprehensive plan to tackle the many issues in Eastwood is being prepared. why is preparing the plan taking so long and when will it be available for review?"

In response, Councillor Hoddinott, Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, stated "The Eastwood Deal' – A Partnership Plan for Eastwood Village has been developed with partners in a comprehensive and coordinated way to ensure a sustainable approach is taken to

improving the quality of life for all residents in Eastwood. The plan includes a variety of aspects and approaches which, as well as increased levels of environmental enforcement, also involves education, engagement, consultation, communication, partnership working and community enablement and involvement. The plan has been developed with partners and was published on Friday 8th July. It should be noted that date of publication has not prevented or delayed any ongoing action, activities or engagements taking place in the area.”

Councillor Reeder asked a supplementary question and quoted the former Prime Minister who had made a television appearance on BBC Look North in respect of the Eastwood area and referred to the fact those out of work for six months would have to go home. Councillor Reeder enquired whether that would be a tool deployed by Rotherham MBC.

In response, Councillor Hoddinott indicated that the Council would welcome any additional resources that central Government may make available, but added that those who were proud to consider Rotherham as their home should be able to make Rotherham their home.

Councillor Reeder asked “As we walk around Eastwood we see numbers of children, boys and girls of school age who should be in school, yet are clearly receiving little or no education. What useful contribution do you believe these children will ever be able to make?”

In response, Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, stated “The Authority provides sufficient school places for all children in the borough and so the children that have been identified should be in school. For those who may have been excluded there is 6 day provision policy in place. Some children do have issues with attendance and/or exclusion and this is a priority for the Early Help & Family Engagement Service and related schools. Examples of work that is taking place to address attendance issues in the area include;

- The Locality Manager meets with the local schools regularly (Clifton, Eastwood Village, Coleridge, East Dene, Herringthorpe) to discuss vulnerable students and ensure an appropriate Early Help intervention is offered to families;
- Individual plans are being drawn up for each child that has persistent absence within Clifton School and early help workers have been directed to prioritise attendance and focus on rigorous action planning to reduce non-attendance and exclusions. Understanding individual needs and enabling workers to track individual progress with children and families will improve school attendance and address some of the cultural

issues related to education and attendance at school;

- The Assistant Director for Early Help and the Head of Service for Early Help Central has recently met with Roma parents, facilitated by the Clifton Learning Project to discuss barriers to attendance/learning and attendance wider issues. As a result a community based piece of work is planned to work with the community. This work is linked with the Eastwood Plan referred to in answer to your previous question;
- Given the recent concerns, a series of attendance sweeps and truancy patrols in partnership with the police are being prioritised in Eastwood over the next week before schools break for the summer.

Councillor Reeder responded that it was good to see that action was being taken, especially in Eastwood.

Councillor Short asked “Newman School currently has little extra capacity for children’s places with special care needs as the year is full! What provision is planned to allow this school to continue to provide its service in the future?”

In response, Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, stated “Since June 2015 a number of actions have been taken to address provision for Special Educational Needs within Rotherham. These include:

- Appointment of a strategic lead for Inclusion and Special Educational Needs who is working well with all key stakeholders including parents and carers;
- Identification of Special Educational Needs provision as a major project area, with additional funding to increase capacity to the process of providing Education, Health and Care Plans;
- With practitioners (including the head teacher of Newman School), have collated an overview of the sufficiency needs of Rotherham, to identify gaps in provision and plan for the future;
- Worked with Special School head teachers to provide a consistent funding model and plan for future provision. This has led to an increase in funding to the Special School sector and an increase in places across all 6 schools.

- Within Newman School this has increased the numbers by 5 places from 90 -95

Given the above, please be assured that the Head of Inclusion now works very closely with our school head teachers and the School Planning and Organisation Group to plan provision for the future and identify areas where we may need to increase the offer in Rotherham.”

Councillor Short asked “The people of Rotherham pay £881 for cremation at Ridgeway, whilst the people of Sheffield pay just £690 an extra £191 more for the same service! Why is this?”

In response, Councillor Hoddinott, Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, stated “In August 2008, the Council entered into a contract with Dignity for the provision of bereavement services which has in an investment of over £3 million across Rotherham. This level of investment was required, both in terms of what it was delivering to the public of Rotherham and also in relation to the Council’s statutory obligations around mercury abatement and other environmental factors. With regard to your question concerning pricing, the contract requires Dignity to develop a pricing structure for the services it provides and in order to ensure that the fees charged for services are reasonable, Dignity are under a contractual obligation to undertake benchmarking of the fees that are charged for the services provided. In general terms, the services in relation to a basic cremation or burial are similar throughout the country. As a result, it is relatively straightforward to benchmark costs in relation to cremations and burials. However, the situation is significantly more complex when it comes to the provision of optional services such as memorials.

As a minimum, the Council expects Dignity to benchmark the fees against the national average and those charged by Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley Councils. Once the benchmarking has been completed, the Council may suggest changes to the proposed fees using the benchmarking data as a guide. The contract requires Dignity to consider these suggested changes, however it does not require them to amend their pricing structure as a result. The contract explicitly states that Dignity are ultimately responsible for determining the fee structure, and that the Council cannot raise a dispute in relation to these fees unless the benchmarking process has not been undertaken correctly.

Recent benchmarking data in relation to burials and cremations is as follows:

Sheffield:	Burial £2325	Adult cremation £650 - £670
Barnsley:	Burial £1782	Adult cremation £673
Doncaster:	Burial £2285	Adult cremation £711
UK average:	Burial £2100	Adult cremation £689
Rotherham:	Burial £1981	Adult cremation £824

Although it is true to say that fees have increased during the eight years that Dignity have operated the service in Rotherham, the fees charged for basic funeral services are not so disproportionate to those charged in other areas. In addition, some services in Rotherham are offered free of charge, whereas in other areas there is a charge made for that same service (for example, in relation to child burial and cremation services).

Councillor Cowles asked “Rotherham is looking for a fresh start. We have 7 councillors identified by the Jay and Casey reports as knew what was happening or not fit for purpose, and one who said on national T.V. that he did not agree with the Casey report. How is this justifiable?”

The Leader of the Council in response referred back to the Casey Report and that it did not name specific individuals. He further indicated that all members had been endorsed by their electorates in May 2016 and it was time to move forward.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Cowles enquired whether Professor Jay or Louise Casey had indicated there was a requirement for re-training? In response, the Leader of the Council stated that was beyond their remit, however Louise Casey was expected to undertake a follow up visit to Rotherham and he would raise the issue with her.

Councillor Cowles asked “What was the cost and time overrun associated with the development and implementation of the Civica, integrated housing system IHMS?”

In response, Councillor Beck provided the following response: “The IHMS project has a phased implementation. Officers have completed Phase 1 and are in the process of implementing phase 2 within agreed timescales. Project costs have been contained within annual budgets set aside for IHMS implementation. The original planned project go live date

of 19th of July for phase 2 has slipped partly due to a lack of supplier resource. The Council is implementing new technology with 'web services' which is a first time deployment for RMBC and our repair contractors. This will provide many benefits including real time appointments and information for customers, thereby improving the overall customer experience. Achieving successful implementation is going to take more time thus delaying the go-live date planned for 19th July 2016. The IHMS Project Board has always been committed to achieving the best for the authority and customers and has agreed to move the go-live date back to September to accommodate the enhancements agreed at Cabinet on April 11th. Officers are currently experiencing further complications with the contractor interfaces. This is exacerbated by the lack of Civica resources which have been very limited to complete the system build. This is now being escalated within supplier senior management. As set out in the papers to cabinet on April 11th, *delivering excellence in customer service through Integrated Housing Management System innovations* the cabinet approved additional expenditure of £144,315 from the £353,000 available from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Investment programme."

As a supplementary question, Councillor Cowles enquired when lessons would be learned in respect of the implementation of major IT projects which seemed to miss deadlines and exceed budgets. In response, Councillor Beck explained that IT was a difficult issue and it was important to allocate sufficient time to ensure that projects were implemented properly.

Councillor Cowles asked "We are spending considerable sums of money to improve children's services, and we are marching to the top of the excellence hill. What provision is being made along the journey, by commissioners and RMBC, to ensure that in future we do not roll back to the bottom?"

Councillor Watson responded "Firstly, I would like to make a distinction between the various elements of children's services, as some have been strong for a considerable period of time. Examples include our educational outcomes especially in the early years and secondary phases; planning efficiently for school places and our response to the Government's 'Troubled Families' agenda with our 'Families for Change' model delivering on all its targets.

The bit that was broken was children's social care and you are right that a proportionate amount of money has been spent on ensuring the response to our most vulnerable children continuously improves.

As reported to cabinet only on Monday of this week, since the council submitted its improvement plan to Ofsted in February 2015 rapid progress has been made. Our work has resulted in a better, more timely response to referrals; more children with plans in place to meet their needs; and

children are now seeing their social worker more frequently. It is very pleasing that according to Ofsted, our work in tackling CSE is pro-active and robust and as well as our own staff; police, health and voluntary sector providers are to be commended on some excellent multi-agency working, which is ensuring children and young people are becoming more aware of the dangers of CSE and those who at risk are being better protected.

However, we are clear there is much more to do and this is about how we embed quality more consistently in all our work with children, young people and their families. We must also plan in a better way for the accommodation needs of children who are brought into our care and ensure that our most vulnerable children achieve better, educational, health and wellbeing outcomes as they make their journey through childhood and make a successful transition into adulthood. We continually participate in external reviews so that there is independent feedback on our progress.

Our plan to ensure that we do not 'roll back to the bottom', as you say, is reflected in our ambition to become a 'child centred borough', delivering an outstanding service to all our children and young people. We have a clear strategy of how we intend to get there, which includes at its heart: developing and nurturing a strong and stable workforce; investing in practice quality; focusing on the voice of the child and using feedback from service users to design good quality services; strengthening partnerships with other agencies; and developing a core of highly performing corporate services to support the children's services agenda."

Councillor Cowles asked "Could you please confirm that Steve Eling, a Policy and Performance officer is also a councillor and the Leader of Sandwell MBC in the West Midlands. And could you inform us of how much time in his current role he spends per week working for RMBC?"

Councillor Alam responded to confirm that Steve Eling is a Councillor and the Leader of Sandwell MBC, in his current role he spends 18.5 hours per week working for RMBC.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Cowles asked whether the Council would advertise for Labour councillors from other parts of the country that would want to work in Rotherham. Councillor Alam indicated that he did not agree with the assertion made by Councillor Cowles.

Councillor Cowles asked "We have repeatedly asked for regular and effective communication, and I am constantly asked for statistics in regard to CSE. From the various operations how many people have been to trial and convicted?"

In response Councillor Read explained "I have provided regular briefings for all Elected Members since I became Leader. The briefings have been comprehensive and cover the range of activity the council is

engaged in from taxi licencing through to ensuring victims and survivors of CSE have access to a comprehensive package of support. Members also receive all South Yorkshire Police and NCA press statements, wider CYPS improvement reports and CYPS monthly performance data. Our programme of scrutiny also allows Members the opportunity to drill down into CYPS progress in more detail. In addition, I have kept Member colleagues up to date with the various CSE operations underway with our police colleagues; and ensured Members have had an opportunity to hear from the Strategic Director, Borough Commander and NCA on our wider response to tackling CSE as a community. If you have not received any of the briefings I have issued please let me know I will ensure they are resent.

As you know our response to tackling CSE has been strong and part of this is the work we have done in rebuilding our multi-agency CSE Team, Evolve. Evolve has a growing reputation for excellent practice, which has been demonstrated by the views of victims and survivors who worked with us on the formal launch of the new service last week. Evolve is currently working directly with 77 children. This includes over 30 young people who are co-worked with social workers from across RMBC, all who are either suffering or at risk of suffering harm through child sexual exploitation. The team is staffed with social workers, police officers, health and voluntary sector staff to take account of the need to support a number of multi-agency Operations. Currently there are a total of 5 full time social workers seconded to these Operations whilst holding a small caseload from core business. The remaining 3 social workers are allocated to children and young people not involved in operations.

In addition to the successful 'Operation Clover' trial which resulted in convictions against six offenders in February this year for a total of 102 years for historical abuse; we are seeing our new approach in Rotherham deliver results in relation to current abuse and CSE. Examples of convictions linked to a number of complex CSE operations include:

- 1) Tom Wilkes who pleaded guilty to on line grooming offences in relation to 3 Rotherham children. He received a 10 year custodial sentence;
- 2) Corrie Adams who has pleaded guilty to online grooming and sexual activity with 14 year old Rotherham girl. He is also charged with rape of a child under 13 years and penetrative sexual activity with a 14 year old non engaged girl
- 3) Following CPS advice, one child has received a Verbal Caution for inciting sexual activity with a girl under 13 years and Aftab Hussain has received a 40 month custodial sentence for on line grooming of a 15 year old Rotherham child.

As can be seen we are taking the issue very seriously and the investment we have made is now starting to reap rewards in securing justice for some of those who have been abused both past and present. Given the scale of 'Operation Stovewood' which has around 300 perpetrators of historical abuse in scope, the challenge is enormous but together with colleagues in the Police, National Crime Agency, health and voluntary sector we are stepping up to the plate and rising to this."

40. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

41. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no confidential matters for consideration.