

Summary Sheet

Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting – 10 October 2016

Title

Review of Neighbourhood Working

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

Non-key decision, included on the Forward Plan for decision on 10th October 2016

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

1. The Rotherham Corporate Improvement Plan, "Fresh Start": Phase Two Action Plan includes the specific improvement theme "strong, high impact partnerships". One of the objectives within this theme is the introduction of a new model of citizen engagement and neighbourhood working linked to the review Area Assemblies, which is action D.16 within the Improvement Plan.
2. The context of the review is much wider and is integral to a strategic review of how the whole Council engages with people and communities in localities, including working with communities to respond to need, a review of the Council's estate and promoting resilience in Rotherham's most deprived neighbourhoods. A further link is to the Corporate Governance Review and potential future constitutional changes.
3. The scope of the review comprised three elements, (1) creating a council wide policy and approach to neighbourhood working, (2) developing a multi-agency approach to neighbourhood working and (3) following the adoption of the new locality model a review of the role and funding of the Neighbourhood Partnerships and Engagement Service.

4. A Members Working Group was established to lead the review. Councillor Yasseen, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services, acted as Chair and was supported by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each of the seven Area Assemblies. A member of the Opposition Group was included on the Working Group.
5. The Working Group undertook visits to four local authorities (Derby CC, Trafford MBC, Barnsley MBC and Doncaster MBC) to enable Elected Members and officers to experience and learn from different best practice models of neighbourhood working. A desk-top review of different local authority neighbourhood models was also completed including examining the approaches taken by Salford MBC, LB Haringey, Manchester CC, Sheffield CC and Blackburn with Darwen MBC.
6. The Working Group received presentations on the current working models from council services; Neighbourhood Partnerships and Engagement, and Community Safety and Street Scene. Presentations were also received from Partners (Rotherham Hospital Trust, the Clinical Commissioning Group and South Yorkshire Police) outlining their current locality working models and plans. Observations were also received from Voluntary Action Rotherham.
7. Members of the Working Group also completed a questionnaire seeking their views on a range of questions relating to:
 - Area based working
 - Devolved budgets
 - Geographical boundaries
 - The current operation of Area Assemblies
 - Their preference of the locality models seen during the visits programme
 - Community engagement and new ways of working including using social media.
8. Following consideration of the outcomes of the visits, a review of questionnaires completed by Area Assembly Chairs and Vice Chairs, and presentations from officers and partners, the Elected Member Working Group has concluded that the Council should re-affirm its commitment to neighbourhood working through the adoption of a new Vision Statement.
9. The Elected Member Working Group submits for further consideration by all elected members, Council directorates and partners, the following draft Vision Statement together with three working Principles that underpin its delivery:

“Putting communities at the heart of everything we do by

- ***Councillors working with their communities on what matters to them***
- ***Listening and working together to make a difference***
- ***Supporting people from different backgrounds to get on well together***

..... to help make people healthier, happier, safer and proud”

10. Members of the Working Group reiterated the importance of maintaining officer support in pursuit of this vision, but did not feel that this was necessarily best served by continuing to operate the current Area Assembly system. Instead the Working Group proposes moving towards a model whereby all Councillors receive officer support at a ward level to fulfil their community leadership role, and work with communities on local issues. Further detail on this will be reported to a future meeting.
11. Members of the Working Group wish to see the Council explore more flexible options for local resident engagement which do not necessarily depend on holding Area Assembly meetings. This approach will allow Council services and members to tailor their engagement in every community. Members felt that it will be increasingly important for them to be able to work with local communities, increasing community resilience, in the face of on-going challenges and shrinking Council resources.
12. Members of the Working Group wish to explore more flexible models of sharing resources between wards, based on appropriate geography for the local area and specific issues. Members reiterated the importance of developing a local ward plan to prioritise activity.
13. The Elected Member Working Group proposes that consideration be given to continuing with the concept of a devolved budget as a way of enabling councillors to directly support community development and engagement in their localities, and request that further work be undertaken to consider how this may develop over time. The Working Group was keen to continue to have access to small capital budgets to be spent on local priorities.
13. Members also suggest that consideration be given to establishing an officer role to help secure external funding for local voluntary and community groups, who will increasingly be important partners as public sector budgets continue to shrink.
14. Members were keen to see local services that respond effectively to local communities, and for ward members to play their part in this. Therefore the Working Group wishes the council to explore how locality-based staff across council services can be brought into more regular contact with ward members, and for ward members to be able to explore issues around service performance in their locality.
15. Members were conscious that the locality models of some Council services and those of partner organisations have been or may soon be subject to review. They therefore noted the importance of a neighbourhood model which will be commensurate with such changes.

Recommendations

1. That the progress on the review and the proposed new Vision Statement and Principles for neighbourhood working be noted.

2. That a further report be submitted outlining proposals from the Elected Member Working Group on the future of the Council's Area Assemblies and options for a devolved budget for councillors.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

RMBC corporate 'Fresh Start' Improvement Plan, 26th May 2015

RMBC corporate 'Fresh Start' Improvement Plan, Phase Two Action Plan (RMBC Cabinet Report), 23rd June 2016

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Possibility of pre-scrutiny consideration prior to Cabinet meeting.

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Title (Main Report)

Review of Neighbourhood Working

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the progress on the review and the proposed new Vision Statement and Principles for neighbourhood working be noted.
- 1.2 That a further report be submitted outlining proposals from the Elected Member Working Group on the future of the Council's Area Assemblies and options for a devolved budget for councillors.

2. Background

- 2.1 Rotherham Council's Corporate Improvement Plan, *A Fresh Start*, includes a key theme, "strong, high impact partnerships". The theme's objective is to deliver "*enhanced neighbourhood working to engage with communities* on:
 - *Policy development and service change*
 - *Community safety*
 - *Community cohesion*"
- 2.2 The action to address this objective is the "*Introduction of a new model of citizen engagement and neighbourhood working linked to a review of Area Assemblies*".
- 2.3 To deliver this action, an Elected Member Working Group was established, chaired by Councillor Yasseen (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services), comprising:
 - Area Assembly Chairs/Vice Chairs
 - A member of the Opposition Group
 - Supported by the Chief Executive and senior internal/external partners.
- 2.4 There have been five meetings of the Elected Member Working Group:
 - On Tuesday 21 June 2016 (open to new Area Assembly Chairs and Vice Chairs)
 - Monday 11 July 2016
 - Tuesday 26 July 2016
 - Wednesday 24 August 2016 (facilitated by an external consultant)
 - Monday 5 September 2016.
- 2.5 The meetings considered internal/external partners locality footprints, and different models of neighbourhood working.

2.6 Additionally, the Cabinet Member and officers attended a national conference which examined the “State of neighbourhood and locality working”, and undertook desktop research and visited four other local authorities operating different models.

2.7 The local authority visits were to:

- Trafford MBC (Wednesday 15th June 2016)
- Barnsley MBC (Tuesday 21st June 2016)
- Derby CC (Wednesday 29th June 2016)
- Doncaster MBC (Friday 15th July 2016)

3. Key Issues

3.1 The review sought to address a number of key issues originally raised by former Commissioner Manzie in the RMBC Corporate “Fresh Start” Improvement Plan (26th May 2015). These were to:

- Determine why working at a neighbourhood level is important
- Describe the outcomes of improved neighbourhood working
- Highlight the added value of a neighbourhood approach to locality working

3.2 The expected outcomes of the review of neighbourhood working are to:

- Improve local democratic engagement and community leadership by describing the way in which Councillors, officers and partners will interact with the local community.
- Identify the support that could be expected by Elected Members from the Council and its key partners.
- Clarify the role of the Council and partners in addressing neighbourhood based issues.
- Determine how other services run by the Council and its partners can be tailored to and benefit from neighbourhood approaches.
- Highlight the role of the community, voluntary and faith sectors in supporting local based organisations to deliver services in neighbourhoods.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 The opinion survey of Area Assembly Chairs/Vice Chairs considered a number of options:

- Should the Council continue with neighbourhood working
- Should the Council continue with or disband the existing Area Assembly meetings

- Should the current Area Assembly boundaries be maintained or should these be reconfigured bringing together natural clusters
- Should the Council continue with the devolved budget as re-introduced during 2016/17 to support neighbourhood working

4.2 The findings from the survey have been incorporated into the recommendations to Cabinet. Specifically Area Assembly Chairs/Vice Chairs were:

- Supportive of neighbourhood working.
- Looking for alternatives to the current standing Area Assembly meetings
- In favour of more ward based working
- Supportive of a devolved budget

5. Consultation

5.1 Detailed consultation has taken place with Area Assembly Chairs and Vice Chairs, directorates and partners as set out in section 2 above.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The Cabinet meeting on 10th October 2016 will be asked to formally approve the new Vision Statement and working Principles. This will be followed by detailed consultation with all elected members, directorates and partners contributing to the review.
- 6.2 As noted above (paragraph 2.1), as an Improvement Plan priority in phase two, progress reports on the implementation of the review will be provided on a regular basis to the Joint Board; as well as to the Lead Cabinet Member (Councillor Yasseen).

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 In March 2016, the Council decided to allocate the Area Assemblies a Devolved Budget for 2016/17 of £280,000. This is made up of £140,000 revenue funding and £140,000 capital funding with an allocation of £20,000 revenue and £20,000 capital to each Area Assembly. The funding is to help the Area Assemblies, in partnership with local communities, deliver the Council's "Vision for Rotherham" priorities and the Rotherham Together Partnership's Priorities.
- 7.2 Projects supported through the devolved budget are expected to focus on "Area Caretaking" and promoting social inclusion.
- 7.3 The 2016/17 devolved budget is projected to be allocated and spent by 31st March 2017. The budget is subject to regular reporting in line with financial regulations. There are no procurement implications arising from the report.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Under Article 12 of the Council's Constitution "Area Assemblies and Joint Arrangements" the Council has approved 7 Area Assemblies which between them cover the whole borough. The area covered by each Area Assembly comprises 3 electoral wards of the borough. Area Assemblies include all of the elected members for the electoral wards within the area and representatives of other public bodies, voluntary and commercial organisations operating within the area. They are open to members of the public. Area Assemblies are mandated to meet at least four times a year at publicised locations within the areas they cover.
- 8.2 Each Area Assembly has a Co-ordinating Group which is a committee of the Council. The Co-ordinating Group membership shall comprise the 9 Elected Members for the Electoral Wards within the area. The Terms of Reference and roles and responsibilities for Area Assemblies and Co-ordinating Groups is set out in detail in the Council's Constitution.
- 8.3 Article 12 will require amendment to introduce any changes to the current role and function of area assemblies and co-ordinating groups. The Working Group's final recommendations will take into account the recommendations of the Governance Review, when recommending any future potential constitutional changes.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 There are no specific human resource implications arising from this report at this stage. Any changes to the roles and responsibilities of officers within the Neighbourhood Partnerships and Engagement Service will be subject to consultation in line with the Council's human resources policies.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The Elected Member Working Group received presentations on the locality plans and geographical service footprint from both Adult Care and Children and Young Peoples directorates. The proposed Vision Statement and Principles supports the Council's new Corporate Plan priorities "*Every child making the best start in life*" and "*Every adult secure, responsible and empowered*".

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 There are no equalities and Human Rights Implications arising from the report.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 The review is part of a much wider strategic review of how the whole council engages with its residents and customers in localities , including a review of the Councils Estate, and managing demand/promoting resilience in Rotherham's most deprived neighbourhoods. The commitment of partners to supporting this improvement theme is also

critical. This is also linked to the Governance Review and potential future constitutional changes.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Resourcing multi-agency locality working is at risk if the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) contribution to area based services is reduced but not replaced. There are a number of services including Neighbourhood Partnerships, ASB and Community Safety, Community Protection, and Street Scene that receive significant HRA contributions to deliver area based working. In the short term the risks can be mitigated through greater co-ordination and planning of services to reduce duplication and costs. In the longer term a new funding model will need to be devised and potentially greater investment in community assets and community development to promote resilience and reduce demand.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Anne Marie Lubanski, Strategic Director of Adult Care & Housing

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:-

Director of Legal Services:- Stuart Fletcher, Solicitor.

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- N/A

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