

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
11th October, 2017

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Brookes, Clark, Cowles, Cusworth, Evans, Mallinder, Napper, Sheppard, Short, Walsh and Wyatt.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Steele declared a personal interest in item 3 (Advice Services Review) as a member of the Board of the Citizens Advice Bureau. Councillor Steele remained in the meeting during the discussion of this item.

14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or the press.

15. ADVICE SERVICES REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Leader of the Council and the Head of Performance, Intelligence and Improvement, concerning the review of advice services in Rotherham. The report made recommendations about the future strategic direction for the services, together with commissioning arrangements and stated that this review was set in the context of significant need for advice services by the residents of Rotherham, including those people already impacted by welfare reforms, especially people with disabilities and families with children. There were also the anticipated additional demands arising from the full roll-out of Universal Credit from April 2018.

The primary focus of the review were the services provided in-house : of Advocacy and Appeals and Financial Inclusion, together with external services provided by Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Kiveton Park Independent Advice Centre and the Rotherham Diversity Forum immigration and nationality advisor. The overall objectives of the review were to secure responsive and effective service provision meeting growing complex needs for these services, with maximum efficiency within the challenging budgetary climate.

The way forward aimed to establish a streamlined and collaborative approach across advice services and providers over the medium term and would be a two-stage approach. The initial stage invited a consortium approach to commissioning from voluntary sector providers through a co-production model. Funding would be awarded aligned to a three-years' service level agreement(s) commencing in April 2018, with annual reviews to further the evolution of the full collaborative approach and ensure that priority needs continued to be met. The proposed processes for production of the model and commissioning are compliant with the "Rotherham Compact". The second stage, timed for 2019, would move to

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an integrated model of advice provision both in-house and with the voluntary sector.

During discussion, the following matters were raised:-

: ensuring that services respond effectively to the significant additional demand for services which may arise after the full roll-out of the Universal Credit from April, 2018, as people are expected to adapt to monthly payments and suffer delays in the processing of benefits, which may create additional hardship;

: the possible effects on issues such as Council housing rent collection, as some people may have greater difficulty managing their personal finances;

: the four tiers (levels) of service provision (as detailed within the submitted report);

: the co-design, with voluntary sector organisations, for services to be delivered by voluntary sector advice providers for three years commencing in April 2018; the timescales, the bidding process and ensuring that the new arrangements are ready to begin on 1st April, 2018;

: provision of appropriate services (eg: assistance with filling in official forms) throughout the Borough area, in order to minimise travelling and the costs of travelling to access services; making appropriate use of efficient service models, including digital technology and self-service access wherever appropriate;

: ensuring that people who are unfamiliar with computers and digital technology, or who may have learning difficulties are provided with suitable assistance when accessing advice services;

: the need to ensure that effective service provision is achieved within the necessary budget and financial limitations;

: ensuring that the "open door" access to services does not involve lengthy waiting times;

: the arrangement and monitoring of service-level agreements with the providers of the various advice services.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the outcomes of the review of advice services in Rotherham, as now reported, be noted.

(3) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board recommends to the Cabinet that:-

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1. That the outcomes of the review be noted.
 2. That approval be given to progress arrangements for advice services in Rotherham, including:
 - Co-design with voluntary sector organisations for services to be delivered by voluntary sector advice providers for three years commencing from April 2018;
 - That the scope of services to be delivered by the voluntary sector focus on provision in levels two and three of the advice model through core service level agreements to a total value of £240,000 per annum, with the provision for additional project-based arrangements covering specific advice service demands and developments over the medium term;
 - Collaboration to produce an integrated model of advice provision across advice services including in-house provision effective from April 2019;
 - Commissioning and funding model options that will best provide flexibilities for service development over the medium term through a consortium approach in the voluntary sector; and
 - Identify as part of the Council's Customer Services and Efficiency Programme, improvements to level one signposting and self-serve provision.
 3. That, subject to the achievement of the objectives of this approach, service level agreement(s) be entered into with voluntary sector providers, including the expectation of leverage of external funds, adoption of priorities and performance arrangements.
 4. That the detailed arrangements be subject to annual review and participation in the further alignment and other developments of advice services in Rotherham in 2019.
- (4) That the review shall include an assessment of the "open door" access utilised by some organisations and the length of waiting times involved.
- (5) That a further report on the progress of the implementation of the outcomes of the review be submitted to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

(Councillor Steele declared a personal interest in the above item, as a member of the Board of the Citizens Advice Bureau and remained in the meeting during the discussion of this item)

16. ROTHERHAM SIDE BY SIDE - HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Assistant Director of Commissioning, containing recommendations for the future commissioning of externally provided Housing Related Support Services in Rotherham. The reports stated that Housing Related Support services

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deliver positive outcomes with the vulnerable people they support, preventing and dealing with emergency homelessness and averting the need for other costlier forms of service provision. Though Housing Related Support services sit within the Adult Care and Housing Directorate portfolio, the preventative element provides whole system benefits.

Homelessness and the risk of homelessness is the focus for all Housing Related Support services. Through the Rotherham Side-by-Side programme the Council has worked closely with existing providers, service users and wider stakeholders to co-produce the future model of externally commissioned Housing Related Support. The review was undertaken to remodel the provision, to meet changing demand and offer better value for money in addition to delivering the savings required for 2018/19.

The New Delivery Model would streamline externally commissioned services into the following housing-related support pathways:-

- Vulnerable Adults
- Complex Need
- Domestic Abuse
- Young People and Young Parents

Members discussed the following salient issues:-

: The co-production of the future model of externally commissioned Housing Related Support had begun during January 2017; the services changes would be made in such a way as to minimise the impact upon individuals; a principal aim to help people to become independent;

: The impact of the Government's welfare reforms;

: The availability of short-term accommodation and the preference for the use of furnished premises instead of "crash-pads";

: Engagement with individuals who present the most difficult challenges and ensuring that they are directed towards the most appropriate services for their needs;

: Members of the Board questioned the delay in the tendering process and asked to be provided with a full list of the organisations which had been invited to submit tenders as part of the commissioning process;

: A question was asked about the availability and use of community centres within Council housing estates;

: The emphasis of the four housing-related support pathways in trying to reduce the level of homelessness in the Borough area; the method of referrals to service provision would aim to address homelessness;

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: The increasing demand for social housing; the availability of such adequate housing for women who have been offenders;

: There is no intention to introduce quotas for the allocation of refuge accommodation (a practice recently adopted by Sheffield City Council, which limits refuge places for people from outside the local authority area);

: All providers of Housing Related Support Services will be required to ensure that services are accessible to all who are eligible (nb: there is no specific service for people from black and minority ethnic communities who are survivors of domestic abuse); the services intend to be all-encompassing, regardless of an individual's ethnic origin, nationality, etc; it was noted that the Apna Haq organisation has obtained funding from the National Lottery for specific services for people from black and minority ethnic communities;

: The aim of providing support for as many individuals as possible, within the limitations imposed by the available budgets; there will be co-operation and joint working between services, although each service will make its own specific assessment of an individual's needs;

: Ensuring that individuals are able to move-on successfully, after the initial assistance from homelessness projects; action to reduce the level of evictions from a homeless project;

: Reducing the number of failed tenancies;

: The range for the Vulnerable Adults Pathway has increased from up to age 18 years to up to 21 years, to avoid duplication of service provision with Children and Young People's Services;

: Sufficiency planning is taking place with Children and Young People's Services, with oversight from the Commissioners, in respect of service provision for young people who leave the care of the Local Authority;

: Ensuring that service provision reacts to changes in the needs of the population (eg: older people and those who may have a range of complex needs);

: Maintaining emergency alarm services within the community (eg: Rothercare) in spite of necessary budget reductions; Members of the Board asked to be provided with details of the separate review of the Rothercare service;

: Reference to the success of the Housing First project, in areas around the country, whose aim is to reduce long-term and repeated homelessness;

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: Members expressed continuing concerns about budget reductions affecting all services, including those in housing;

: The importance of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (eg: for victims of domestic abuse); services were aware of the prevention of domestic abuse and violence as being a very high priority in the Borough area;

: The monitoring of the circumstances of vulnerable people who are living in supported-accommodation;

: Reducing the incidence of failed housing tenancies and the same people being involved in repeatedly failed tenancies.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board supports the recommendations as set out in the report now submitted, which are to be considered further by the Cabinet and Commissioners.

(3) That a report on the progress of the implementation of the re-modelled and recommissioned Housing Related Support Services in Rotherham be submitted to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board during the Summer, 2018.

(4) That the appropriate officers submit reports to future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on:-

- (a) the Housing First Project; and
- (b) the review of the Rothercare service.

17. TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH

Consideration was given to a report, presented by Councillor Lelliott (Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy) and by the Transportation and Highways Design Manager, concerning the proposed establishment of Transport for the North as a Sub-National Transport Body under Section 102J of the Local Transport Act 2008.

The report stated that the consent of each Highway Authority within the area of each Combined Authority (in Rotherham's case, the Sheffield City Region) which was a constituent Authority of Transport for the North was required to the making of Regulations by the Secretary of State for Transport. These Regulations contain provisions which giving Transport for the North highway powers to be exercised concurrently with the Local Highway Authorities.

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The stated purpose of Transport for the North is to transform the transport system of the North of England by planning and delivering the improvements needed to connect the region with fast, frequent and reliable transport links, which will facilitate economic growth so as to create a Northern Powerhouse.

Members noted that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Leader of the Opposition Group on the Council had agreed that this matter be exempt from the call-in process as the response to Government had to be submitted by the deadline of Friday 20th October, 2017.

Discussion ensued on the following issues:-

: The role of Transport for the North would be to encourage connectivity around the region (in transport terms), thereby encouraging economic growth; Transport for the North will not become a Highway Authority in its own right;

: Transport for the North will enter into a written protocol with the Constituent Authorities (of the region) before exercising any transport powers or functions;

: Transport for the North will comprise one Elected Member from each Constituent Authority;

: The region of the North extended from the southern most cities of Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield to Cumbria and Northumberland in the North and as far as the border between England and Scotland;

: Individual local authorities may still be required to contribute funding to regional transport schemes which have specific benefits for their own areas;

: Transport for the North would have certain enabling powers and must also obtain the specific approval of the appropriate Highway Authority for schemes affecting the highway; Transport for the North would have no powers to impose highway or transport schemes on a Local Authority area (eg: toll roads);

: Transport for the North will provide a means of lobbying Government on transport issues (including bodies such as Rail North).

Members asked to be provided with details of the draft Constitution for Transport for the North.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agrees with the recommendation that this Council formally consents under Section 102J of the Local Transport Act 2008 to the making, by the Secretary of State for Transport, of Regulations to establish Transport for the North as a Sub-National Transport Board and giving Transport for the North concurrent highway powers.

18. SCRUTINY REVIEW - ALTERNATIVE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICE IN ROTHERHAM

Further to Minute No. 80 of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission held on 12th September, 2017, consideration was given to a report, presented by Councillor M. Clark (Chair of the Improving Lives Select Commission), concerning the scrutiny review of Alternative Management Arrangements for Children's Services in Rotherham.

The scrutiny report, as submitted, presented the latest analysis and current thinking of the Improving Lives Select Commission's cross-party review group on the range of Alternative Management Arrangements for Children's Services. The report evaluates the relative strengths and challenges of the primary options available to the Council and includes initial recommendations for future management arrangements.

Members discussed the following issues:-

: The consideration of Alternative Management Arrangements was one aspect of the eventual return of powers relating to Children's Services to the control of the Council (such powers still currently being under the control of the Government-appointed Commissioners);

: For the purposes of this scrutiny review, the definition of Alternative Management Arrangements is "the delivery of Children's Services other than through traditional in-house local authority services";

: The context of the Government's policy paper "Putting Children First" (Department for Education, 2016); this publication set out a challenge to all Councils to think about how they can make and sustain improvements across Children's Services, including considering alternative delivery models or management arrangements;

: The report of the second workshop study led by the ISOS Partnership, concerning the improvements to this Authority's Children's Services (the workshop had taken place on 17th February, 2017); this process was being supported by the Local Government Association;

: Letters received from this Council's partner organisations concerning the improvements to this Authority's Children's Services;

: This Council's current Children and Young People's Plan 2016 to 2019;

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: The establishment of a Trust organisation to have operational responsibility for Children's Services had not been ruled out (nb: some other local authorities (eg: Doncaster MBC) operate Children's Services by means of a Trust); it was acknowledged that the different delivery models and management arrangements across the country are in various stages of development;

: The scrutiny review had examined the Council's capacity to : (i) self-assess accurately; (ii) develop strategic priorities that will address weaknesses; and (iii) implement these strategic priorities swiftly and effectively; Rotherham's current position was assessed as being in the "fair to good" category; the ultimate aim is to achieve "Good" and "Outstanding" status for the Council's Children and Young People's Services;

: The importance of continuing external scrutiny, support and challenge in delivering improved children's outcomes in Rotherham.

Resolved:- (1) That the report of the scrutiny review of Alternative Management Arrangements for Children's Services in Rotherham, as now submitted, be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agrees with the recommendations of this scrutiny review, as detailed in the report.

(3) That the scrutiny review report be forwarded to the Cabinet and Commissioners for their consideration.

(4) That the response of the Cabinet and Commissioners be reported to a meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission.

19. SCRUTINY REVIEW - EMERGENCY PLANNING

Further to Minute No. 81 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission 20th September, 2017, consideration was given to a report, introduced by Councillor Wyatt (Chair of the Task and Finish Group), which described the outcome of the scrutiny review into the Borough Council's Emergency Planning process. Detailed within the report were:-

: the legal context governing the provision of the Emergency Plan (which is being renamed the Major Incident Plan);

: the Joint Service Agreement which exists between the Rotherham Borough Council and the Sheffield City Council to provide and implement the Emergency Plan (Major Incident Plan);

: the Emergency Plan (Major Incident Plan) is being reviewed and refreshed;

: the fifteen recommendations arising from the scrutiny review.

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Reference was made to the availability of training for Elected Members, Parish Councillors and also volunteers in respect of the Emergency Plan (Major Incident Plan) and responding to major incidents.

Resolved:- (1) That the report of the scrutiny review into the Borough Council's Emergency Planning process be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the report be forwarded to the Cabinet and Commissioners for their consideration and response to the recommendations.