

Overview and Scrutiny Update



October - December
2019

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Overview and Scrutiny Update

Our Work Programme 2019-2020

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

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- ❖ Major Incident Plan
- ❖ Area Housing Panel Review
- ❖ Employment and Skills Strategy
- ❖ Flooding Alleviation

Welcome to the second update for 2019-20

The purpose of these updates is to give an overview of the work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) and the Select Commissions - Health (HSC), Improving Lives (ILSC) and Improving Places (IPSC) during the last few months.

Although fewer scrutiny meetings took place during the autumn than envisaged due to the pre-election publicity period prior to the general election, there is still plenty of positive work by Scrutiny to report back. However, the scrutiny work programme for the rest of 2019-2020 has needed to be reviewed to re-prioritise and reschedule items to ensure the focus remains on the key issues.

One positive has been to hear directly from service users at ILSC about their experiences of Early Help Services and Youth Offending Services respectively. Hopefully this service user input will be something which can be incorporated more frequently into scrutiny work across the committees.

Another positive has been the opportunity for IPSC to undertake pre-decision scrutiny at an earlier stage when the Select Commission considered the emerging proposals in the review of Area Housing Panels. Again this is something to build upon and encourage for other policy proposals.

The work of HSC during the last few months has had a strong focus on performance and ensuring progress in Adult Social Care and health services; in addition to looking closely at the effectiveness of multi-agency working in relation to social and emotional wellbeing and mental health, which is such an important issue for us all.

Finally it is pleasing to see that the final version of the Youth Transport Charter, which originated following a Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge supported by OSMB, will be launched this month with a webpage, posters and leaflets.

The first section of this report covers pre-decision scrutiny, whether undertaken by OSMB or one of the Select Commissions, followed by sections for each individual committee. Where relevant for this period the update will include details of:-

- Progress monitoring of strategies and plans following past scrutiny
- Recommendations made by the committees
- Outcomes resulting from scrutiny
- Reviews - underway or due to commence
- Sub-group/Task and Finish Group activity
- Member visits
- Public involvement in scrutiny
- Key future items
- Other activity undertaken by the Scrutiny Members

I hope this will be a useful and informative update of overview and scrutiny work undertaken between October and December.

Cllr Brian Steele
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Pre-decision Scrutiny

The recommendations made in all the pre-decision reports considered by Scrutiny were supported. Details of additional recommendations made by Scrutiny, plus any requests for specific information and intentions for future monitoring, are outlined below.

- ❖ **Crisis Support (Local Welfare Provision)**
Cabinet agreed the recommendation from Scrutiny for further pre-decision scrutiny of the future delivery arrangements by OSMB prior to the final decision by Cabinet.
- ❖ **Social Value Policy**
Overview and Scrutiny Management Board recommended arranging a Member Seminar in respect of the Social Value Policy and requested a report back 12 months following the implementation of the policy to review its impact.
- ❖ **House to House Collection Policy**
Cabinet supported the recommendation from Scrutiny regarding recyclable charity collection bags and would encourage recycling opportunities from within the policy.
- ❖ **Area Housing Panels Review (See IPSC for more detail)**
OSMB endorsed the outcomes of the workshop undertaken by IPSC in October and confirmed at Cabinet that Scrutiny had noted:-
 - the review process undertaken and consultation feedback received to date
 - the emerging proposals for Ward Housing Hubs and work to be undertaken to test this approach
 - the emerging recommendations with regard to Ward Housing Hubs, future budget setting and management and project governance
- ❖ **Rotherham Town Centre Car Parking Strategy**
OSMB made a number of recommendations that were supported by Cabinet:-
 - a proactive approach to tackle the dangers of poor lighting in Council car parks, given the usage by the public in the early morning and evening during dark hours in the autumn and winter
 - to improve the reliability of access/egress equipment at car parks and also to seek to develop, as funding becomes available, the use of mobile applications for customers
 - to give consideration to creating further disabled parking spaces strategically within Rotherham Town Centre
 - to make the diagram clearer that shows the connectivity under 'Strategic Principles' within the strategy
- ❖ **Housing Revenue Account Rents and Service Charges 2020-21**
Two recommendations from the Board were approved by Cabinet:-
 - for the number of Universal Credit claimants to be closely monitored with a view to reducing the level of rent arrears from tenants in receipt of that benefit
 - for consideration be given to including the measure in the Housing Service Plan 2020-21 and for this to be included in the report to IPSC in June 2020

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❖ Adult Services Non-residential Care Charging Policy Proposals

Cabinet agreed the scrutiny recommendation to ensure that all future consultation and engagement exercises involving drop-in sessions for the public would be arranged in locations in the north, south and centre of the borough, with specific consideration to be given to using Members to facilitate events, where appropriate. This recommendation will be referred to the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Group.

During the discussions at OSMB a question was raised regarding the level of input from unpaid carers to the consultation. Although unpaid carers are not formally a protected group under the Equality Act 2010 it was acknowledged that this group should always be included in future consultation questionnaires.

An update report on the implementation of the policy will be provided to HSC in April 2021.

❖ Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2020-21

The proposal was supported by OSMB without any additional recommendations.

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❖ Children's Services Financial Monitoring and Review 2019-20

As part of its close scrutiny of the Council's budget and financial position, OSMB considered an update on implementation of CYPS' two-year budget recovery plan to reduce the budget pressures from previous years (£15.7m in 2018-19) and deliver budget savings. The budget pressure at the end of July was £4.9m with adverse movement of £600k in the period, and whilst the number of Looked After Children was just below the budget profile for this period, the number of placements in residential care was creating budget pressures. Assurance was provided that the service was aware of the challenges and working to address them. The Cabinet Member was confident the savings target would be met, but it was difficult to be precise on the timescale.

In relation to the recruitment of new foster carers, officers confirmed the offer was competitive with the authority doing much better in terms of the package for foster carers than previously. Visits to the fostering website had increased significantly, coupled with more visibility and transparency in relation to recruitment, with evidence of recruitment from the independent foster agency sector being seen.

Members expressed concern at the figures in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant and sought assurances in respect of arrangements for monitoring. A recovery plan had been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) and it was anticipated the DfE would introduce a monitoring programme. Assurances were also sought in respect of actions being taken to address the £500,000 overspend in respect of transport. OSMB resolved to have a further report in January 2020 in relation to fostering and the High Needs Block.

❖ Council Plan Quarter 1 - Areas for Improvement

Consideration was given to the Council Plan Quarter 1 Performance Report with the focus on measures highlighted as areas for improvement within the exception report and the actions required to improve performance.

Members probed into the measures in respect of repeat child protection plans, missed bin collections and delivery of new homes. They were provided with assurance around the systems in place to ensure teachers understood the needs and issues of Looked After Children. The Board also queried the level of compliance in respect of safeguarding requirements for hackney carriage/private hire licence holders. Officers confirmed there was 100% compliance as a licence would not to be issued without a check from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

❖ Annual Compliments and Complaints Report 2018-19

OSMB discussed the annual report on complaints and compliments received by the Council during 2018-19 in line with statutory requirements. Members welcomed the report and were particularly pleased to see improvements in complaints handling and the learning and trends identified, specifically referencing the opportunities for improvement.

It was noted that Members often received compliments arising from their casework which were not being recorded and that this was an area for improvement. A further suggestion was to incorporate the recommendations from the Local Government Ombudsman annual report and officers confirmed that this could be

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done in future. Reference was made to avoidable contact and how the authority was undertaking to reduce calls to the Council. Work was underway, but it was difficult to quantify volumes as data was still manually recorded. The new system to improve customer experience had been procured and once operational would provide greater insight. Customer Access would continue to be a focus for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board throughout the municipal year.

❖ **Monitoring Report - Implementation of Recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Agency, Consultancy and Interim Staff**

The review had sought assurance that the Council measured performance and value for money in this area and took appropriate action to maintain spend within acceptable limits. From previous monitoring updates OSMB had welcomed the progress made but agreed to maintain a focus on agency spending.

It was reported that the Workforce Management Board (WMB) continued to monitor and control agency costs by challenging usage across the Council, taking into account factors such as risks in not filling the role, including safeguarding, budget and whether the work could be delivered in another way. The WMB also reviewed spend on a monthly basis,

Members queried what work had taken place within the Regeneration and Environment directorate to reduce agency spend and introduce multitasking within the existing workforce to build capacity and reduce the need for additional cover. Officers confirmed there had been a heavy reliance on agency workers in the directorate but a large in-year reduction in agency spend was anticipated. Agency costs were largely incurred due to seasonal work between March and October, but work was being undertaken to analyse the potential for work to be done outside peak hours. Options were being explored with the trades unions.

Referring to the major transformational changes within Adult Social Care, Members sought reassurances that posts could be filled without recourse to agency or interim staff. Recent recruitment activity had been successful and the position would be kept under review, but officers would need to report back with the actual details. A further update will be provided in November 2020.

❖ **Adult Social Care Workshop - Budget, Performance and Target Operating Model**

Since 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has regularly scrutinised the budget position and service performance for Adult Social Care together as the two are closely interlinked. The purpose of this approach is to seek assurance that the budget overspend will be reduced and proposed savings achieved without a negative impact on service users and performance, whilst making the requisite changes to practice and service transformation.

The workshop session provided Members with an overview of the new operating model for Adult Social Care that would be implemented from October 2019 onward. Members felt that the workshop had provided a very useful insight into the new model and had welcomed the opportunity to discuss a number of issues in detail.

The six monthly Financial and Performance Update was also discussed at the workshop, including details of the reassessment programme and forecast savings delivery over the next four years for all cohorts. An indication of trends in demand for services and average weekly costs was provided. Relevant performance

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measures from the Council Plan that met the exception reporting criteria were also discussed. A further progress update for Adult Social Care would be scheduled for the OSMB meeting in March 2020.

❖ Performance Sub-group - Hate Crime and Fly Tipping

Following scrutiny of the Council Plan performance measures and the Safer Rotherham Partnership annual report, OSMB held a focused meeting to consider performance on hate crime and fly tipping. For both issues Members were provided with the definition of each measure, the reporting process, current performance, benchmarking data and what actions had been taken or were planned.

Hate Crime

The measure under focus was “increase in percentage of positive outcomes for Hate Crime over the year”, with a target of 20%.

After in-depth discussion and questions on the information presented, OSMB sought greater assurance regarding joined up working and on actions to address hate crime/incidents across all the relevant equality characteristics. They also agreed to invite a representative from the Independent Scrutiny Panel to the meeting when the next SRP annual report would be considered.

Three recommendations resulted:-

- More focused work to address hotspot areas
- Reviewing the impacts of the interventions
- More work with community groups to provide oversight/lead on specific actions

Fly Tipping

The measure under scrutiny was “Effective enforcement action taken where evidence is found – Fly Tipping (fixed penalty notices and prosecutions)”.

The sub-group explored a number of issues including the costs of clearing up rubbish that had been dumped, how repeat offences were handled and potential options for dealing with commercial waste. Overall Members felt reassured by the actions taking place which had led to an upward trend in performance. They recommended that more should be done in terms of awareness raising and publicising achievements. For example having the number of prosecutions on the website to give people confidence that the Council was taking action and to give clear messages that people would be prosecuted. Awareness raising should also cover duty of care responsibilities around waste removal and disposal.

❖ Customer and Digital Programme

OSMB are maintaining a watching brief on developments within this programme of transformation of customer access, which is also due to deliver significant budget savings. A large number of projects are underway, each of which with varying complexity, dependencies and timescales.

The sub-group were updated on progress in Finance and Customer Services, which includes redesign projects in Revenue & Benefits Service and Customer Experience Management and the Website. One of the recent developments is exploring ways to link people directly to their individual accounts for transactions. Further

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information was also provided for Regeneration and Environment and for the Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate, especially changes to HR and Payroll.

The programme plan continues to be regularly reviewed to ensure the timescales and priority order satisfy Council objectives and stakeholder needs. Members reiterated their concerns regarding ensuring access and inclusion for all customers, including those less confident in using digital channels or who may face barriers due to disability.

Other activity

❖ Visit from Sheffield

The Chair and Vice Chair met with a group of Members from Sheffield Council who were involved in a review of their governance arrangements. Although various aspects of scrutiny work were talked about, the main focus was to discuss Rotherham's approach to and experience of pre-decision scrutiny. Feedback afterwards was that the Members from Sheffield had found the meeting interesting and helpful.

❖ Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

It was agreed to convene a working group later in the municipal year to review the authority's position against the guidance with a view to making recommendations for improvements to be implemented from 2020-21.

Coming up

- ❖ [Response to Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge – Young Carers](#)
- ❖ Budget Consultation Outcomes
- ❖ Budget and Council Tax
- ❖ Council Plan Quarter 2 – Performance Exception Report
- ❖ Employee Opinion Survey

Health Select Commission

❖ Workshop - Refresh of Suicide Prevention and Self-harm Action Plan

HSC participated in a focused session in order to seek assurances regarding current activity, future plans and resources for work on suicide prevention and self-harm and to scrutinise and have input into the draft action plan.

A short presentation outlined work at both local level and at South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Integrated Care System level on suicide prevention. Other supporting papers, including financial information and Public Health data on suicide prevalence rates and suicide prevention profiles, provided additional information and informed discussion with representatives from RMBC and partners involved in this work. The Draft Rotherham Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm Action Plan 2019-2021 had been circulated in advance of the workshop to assist Members in developing their questions. The video for the “Be The One” campaign, which was launched in September, was also played at the workshop.

Members went through the draft action plan in detail asking a number of questions regarding the various workstreams and touching on broader issues in relation to the information provided. Key issues explored included funding and sustainability; work with primary care; training; work with schools; governance; contacts and information for parents/carers; and the small grants scheme.

HSC members were reassured about the multi-agency work taking place in Rotherham on suicide prevention and self-harm. They acknowledged the benefits of the real time data surveillance and welcomed the refreshed plan, recognising that this did not represent the totality of the work taking place on these issues. The commitment of partners was also evident from the discussion during the workshop and will be necessary to make further progress. Training and awareness raising for staff, colleagues, parents and carers continues to be a key factor and will support the achievement of the key aims within the plan. Some initiatives were at an early stage but had already demonstrated positive impact, although funding to ensure future sustainability of successful projects needed to be addressed.

It was agreed future reports to HSC would be by exception through liaison with the Cabinet Member. Officers were asked to consider presenting the information about the local picture (pages 8 and 9 of the plan) in a different way so it was clearer. A small number of wider issues raised by HSC were taken away for consideration. These related to information and training for foster carers, training and awareness raising around Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGB&T) people as a specific cohort, autism, and letters in connection with debts and financial issues.

❖ Rotherham Hospital - Achieve an improved Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating

The Chief Nurse provided an update regarding the findings and ongoing actions to improve the rating for the Trust, in particular for the Urgent and Emergency Care Centre (UECC). Since the CQC inspections in 2018 a comprehensive action plan had led to significant progress to address concerns raised by the CQC and examples of activity and improvements were outlined across all five domains. The CQC had subsequently returned in an unannounced inspection in August 2019 to the UECC and a re-rating of the core service would ensue with the Trust hoping to achieve improved ratings in domains previously rated as inadequate.

Members questioned the extent to which the CQC had picked up on teething problems given the reorganisation within the Trust. Some recognition had been

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given to this such as the vastness of the areas, bringing things together and cultural issues. Team building and organisational development were being worked on, including strong leadership and support for escalating issues, but it was about delivery to the required standards as well.

In relation to mandatory training work with certain staff had been mentioned and HSC inquired what more was needed to ensure full compliance. Safeguarding support had been increased in the department along with training compliance, with weekly safeguarding supervision provided by the Named Nurse. Further work was taking place with some medical colleagues but as it could be difficult to release staff from the sharp end in the UECC alternative delivery methods were being explored.

Significant staffing issues had been present in the paediatric UECC but no agency staff had been used since early 2019. The hospital's own staff and bank staff covered extra shifts and the Trust now exceeded CQC requirements for paediatric nursing staffing. In the general UECC agency staff were used due to unfilled vacancies, mainly for medical staff. Following a review of nursing staff, vacancies would be backfilled with bank/agency staff to ensure an appropriate skill mix.

Other points explored were ways to reward positive role models and staff behaviours; numbers attending the UECC and impact on bed availability for patients needing to be admitted; and what the monthly culture checks with staff were showing. Members also asked how differently things would look and feel now from a patient perspective in the UECC compared with at the beginning of this journey. They were assured that the UECC was busy but would feel like a calmer and safer environment to be in, with staff now more engaged and better communication. With a high throughput of patients delays were inevitable but triage times were monitored and staff were ensuring people were streamed appropriately from the front door.

Progress was noted and the positive report was welcomed with the hope of it being formally confirmed in due course. HSC requested a further monitoring report once the outcome of the CQC re-inspection was known.

❖ Social, Emotional and Mental Health Strategy

A short presentation provided an overview of the latest draft of the new Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Strategy. Initial actions had commenced in October 2018 with the development of robust data on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Sufficiency and would culminate in new provision being introduced in a phased approach by September 2021. An action plan covering the six core priorities was incorporated within the draft strategy and set out timescales to implement the Mental Health Trailblazer (see below), which would pilot a new approach to delivering mental health support in schools.

HSC asked about training and support across the wider workforce and if it would encompass understanding behaviours and how to deal with them, especially regarding some of the challenges of complex behaviours of Looked After Children. It was confirmed that this was the vision of what the outcome of the training should be, although it would be a significant undertaking. Training needs across the system, including schools, staff, parents and carers needed to be understood, with clarity on how these needs could be met and by whom.

Clarification was requested on how much focus would be on prevention as it was not included as one of the priorities yet would be an underpinning part of the model. In addition, Members asked whether the strategy would support other innovative

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work already happening in schools to help young people around their mental health. A whole school approach was desired and having a positive attitude to mental health, and strategies to support good mental health, applied in all workplaces. Trailblazer would support that and although the pilot was only in a small number of schools the governance structure aimed to broaden it out. In light of the feedback whole school approaches and prevention would be strengthened in the document.

A query was raised with regard to seeming heavy reliance on the Trailblazer and if that meant any concerns about sustainability, such as future funding. It was acknowledged that Trailblazer did have a strong focus in 2019-20 with going live and being a good opportunity but not all priorities relied on Trailblazer and they had separate funding streams to support them. For example, for the work with the workforce separate funding had been identified and sufficiency work would be delivered through the capital programme.

The Chair returned to two recommendations made at a previous meeting. One had been for consideration to be given to having a lead case worker for families as their dedicated single point of contact. Confirmation was given that this was happening but would depend where the child sat in the system and could be a social worker, someone from Early Help, the Education Health and Care Plan coordinator or a single point of contact within the school. The second had been for consideration to be given to support for LGB&T+ young people and whether anything specific had been included in the strategy or in the Trailblazer for that cohort of young people. It was confirmed that this had not been highlighted in either but could be picked up. Information about support through Early Help would be circulated again to HSC.

❖ Schools Mental Health Trailblazer Pilot

Following scrutiny of the SEMH Strategy, a second presentation outlined the Mental Health Trailblazer. This will see Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) established in 22 schools/education settings across Rotherham with up to 8,000 children and young people receiving face-to-face support to help address and prevent mild to moderate mental health problems. Four waves were described as part of a graduated response, with a range of activities within each wave that needed to dovetail with and enhance what was in place already.

Discussion ensued on a wide number of issues with additional detail provided and further information shared after the meeting. Some of the main areas of focus included practitioner training and expertise; the role of senior mental health leads in schools; funding and future sustainability; how the pilot would operate in practice; and support for those with higher need levels or close to exclusion. Members commented on a lack of awareness about the Trailblazer across the wider workforce, including staff from Early Help, and this would be taken back as information should be being cascaded.

As an NHS England programme clear outcomes were needed so measures would include a reduction in inappropriate referrals and increased confidence in schools (measured by school workforce perception surveys) which could be reported back in 12 months.

HSC noted the progress on the implementation of the Mental Health Trailblazer pilot. The Select Commission requested details of the training and types of interventions to be delivered in schools and recommended that consideration be given to including support for LGB&T+ young people as a cohort.

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- ❖ **Nursing Associates**

HSC considered a short presentation on the role of Nursing Associates and how this would help to address the national shortage of Registered Nurses, by bridging the gap between staff in unregulated support roles and Registered Nurses. The first five Nursing Associates had qualified in April 2019 and were still at Rotherham Hospital. During June 2019, a further 22 commenced training and the Trust would continue to support future cohorts as part of its wider workforce planning. It was confirmed that in terms of patient care the main difference between the two roles would be in the organisation, management and accountability of planning care for groups of patients rather than hands on care delivery. Nursing Associates would be responsible for delivery of care planned by the Registered Nurse.
- ❖ **Quality Sub-group – RDaSH**

A detailed presentation covered new developments, both across the Trust and specific to the Rotherham Care Group, including perinatal mental health services and trauma resilience. A series of graphs showed monthly data from March 2018-October 2019 for patient safety measures. Data on complaints was also presented. Progress on the three quality priorities for 2019-20 and development of the Quality and Patient Safety Strategy were discussed. Members probed into several of the patient safety measures and were assured that from a governance perspective data was interrogated robustly at all levels in the respective Care Groups then reported upwards, with trends, spikes and themes examined closely. A further update will follow at the year end when the draft Quality Report is circulated for feedback.
- ❖ **Performance Sub-group – Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF)**

The sub-group met in November to consider the year-end report on the framework measures for 2018-19. This included regional, national and CIPFA benchmarking data with statistical neighbours to show how Rotherham had compared with other local authorities. Detailed analysis of key findings from the annual ASC Service User Survey and biennial Carer Survey were also discussed at length.

Overall Rotherham remained in a similar “mid-pack” position to where it had been the previous year, with measures in all four quartiles. All five Carer Survey measures were in the top 50% and good progress was seen on several measures. Members probed into those measures which had declined and sought assurances that the new model and ways of working would be reflected in improvements to the measures as they became embedded. Support for carers was acknowledged as an area for improvement and will be in the HSC work programme in 2020.

Other activity

- ❖ **Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Proposals for an engagement/pre-consultation exercise to establish public and stakeholder views on the potential standardisation of NHS policy on prescribing gluten free products across South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw were discussed. Progress updates were scrutinised regarding transformation work in the Hospital Services Programme and implementation of the new pathway for hyper acute stroke care, with data requested on the impact of the changes for Rotherham patients to date. A forward plan for the work of the Joint Committee of Clinical Commissioning Groups was shared to identify possible areas of future joint scrutiny.

Coming up

- ❖ Rotherham Integrated Health and Social Care Place Plan Refresh - Workshop
- ❖ Autism Strategy and Implementation Plan
- ❖ Quality Sub-group – The Rotherham Foundation Trust

Improving Lives Select Commission

- ❖ **Rotherham Early Help and Youth Offending Services - Service User Experience**
ILSC heard from service users who were invited to give an account of their experiences of early help services and youth offending services respectively. The service users outlined the support and advice received from staff and the positive impact the interventions had had on them. These included support for new parents, assistance with benefit and financial advice, employment support and transition into adult services. They also highlighted how different agencies were co-ordinated to deliver tailored provision that reflected their assessed needs.

Officers from the Early Help Service provided case studies (with consent from service users) which illustrated how the voice of service users was captured and indicated the breadth and complexity of the case work under consideration. Further information was provided on the early help offer to new parents. Details were also given of the “Signs of Safety” methodology used to ensure consistency of practice, and how positive outcomes for children and young people were measured.

With regard to young offenders, one service user highlighted the lack of education and employment opportunities and this was picked up in the recommendations made regarding the Youth Justice Plan (see below). Work with schools aimed to minimise school exclusions and promote attendance as this was recognised as an important factor in diverting young people from offending behaviours. Work was also undertaken with young offenders under 18, to ensure that if transitioning into adult services, this was done as smoothly as possible. Examples of peer support schemes set up to engage young offenders or those at risk of offending and offer diversionary activities were also highlighted.

- ❖ **Rotherham Early Help Offer**
Members then discussed an overview of performance and a paper outlining the key themes covered and plans moving forward. This included the statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)* which set out requirements for Early Help Services to provide a continuum of support to respond to the different levels of need of individual children and families; details of the Early Help Strategy 2016-19; and the 2018 Ofsted report from the re-inspection of Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, which noted effective early help work with children and families. All phases of the Early Help Strategy had been completed on time, with all associated savings delivered.

Following previous lines of enquiry from ILSC, information was provided on early help assessments (EHA) completed by partners and how the voice of children and young people was captured. Steps taken to improve partner completions of EHA were outlined including sharing good practice, quality checks and providing information and advice, plus support where appropriate. In relation to capturing the voice of the child or young people, details of consultation and engagement events were outlined. Practice learning days also highlighted how workers considered the voice of the child and young people. Exit Surveys and case closures had been adapted to ensure specific questions were asked.

Members’ attention was also drawn to key risks for the Early Help Service, research commissioned by the Local Government Association (March 2019) which identified the key enablers of an effective early help , and the strategic change programme

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taking place across Children's Services which included Market Management, Demand Management and the Early Help and Social Care Pathway. Specifically, the pathway sought to develop systems and processes that provided the right level of care and support at the right time, in the right setting, leading to better outcomes and fewer children and young people coming into care. The objectives included greater focus on prevention and early intervention.

Clarification was sought on the current budget and future sustainability of the service. It was highlighted that 40% of the Early Help Service was funded from external sources, although uncertainty existed over future Troubled Families funding and other streams. Limited research was available on cost avoidance for partners arising from early help interventions; however, higher level data showed that early help services were making a positive impact.

The Chair requested further scrutiny on the early help offer, to include an analysis using the ISOS framework, with a sub-group established to scope the specific elements which require assurance.

❖ Rotherham Youth Justice Plan 2019-21

A presentation outlined the role of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) who are located within the Early Help Service and are governed by the YOT Management Board and Safer Rotherham Partnership. The YOT work alongside statutory partners including the police, South Yorkshire Probation Trust and the NHS, together with organisations contracted from the Voluntary and Community Sector, to achieve the national youth justice strategic objectives, which are to:

- Prevent Offending
- Reduce Re-Offending
- Increase Victim and Public Confidence
- Ensure the Safe and Effective use of Custody

The following areas were highlighted as working well:

- The rate of First Time Entrants for Rotherham continued to fall significantly.
- Rotherham continued to have custody rates below national and regional figures.
- The voice of young people was strong within the YOT and young people attended and presented at the YOT Board when available.
- Proactive YOT Board Chair who sought innovative ways to share good practice.
- Good relationships with the Youth Justice Board regional leads who provided essential peer support and challenge.
- Child Criminal Exploitation pathways in place across the sub-region with outreach, intelligence sharing and partnership working.

In respect of areas for improvement, the Looked After Children status of the offending cohort continued to increase as a percentage from 20% in Q4 2018-19 to 25% in Q1 2019-20. It was noted that as this was a small cohort any increase would be reflected as a large percentage change. Reoffending rates also continued to be of concern. However, programmes had been developed to address barriers to learning to reduce the number of young people who were NEET (not in education, employment or training) and to increase access to counselling. YOT staff were encouraged to support families to attend the range of parenting programmes available and further work was also underway to identify the needs of the cohort better, particularly in relation to Special Education Need or unmet needs.

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Examples were given of how different agencies worked together to disrupt anti-social behaviour, to prevent escalation and possible entry into the youth justice system. This partnership working included housing officers, fire officers, police and police community service officers along with early help workers.

Further clarification was sought in respect of the lower rate of entrants in Rotherham and the evidence which supported the assertion that Rotherham was performing better than other South Yorkshire authorities. Details were given of the assessment and triage process, which contributed to lower levels of entrants into the system.

Members probed into how risks around child criminal exploitation and peer radicalisation were assessed for first time entrants and re-offenders. Assurance was given that there was good oversight of the Prevent and criminal exploitation agenda. Examples were given of the assessment process, restorative justice in relation to hate crime and work undertaken with young people in schools. Reference was made to whether the findings of the Youth Justice Board Peer Review in 2017 were still pertinent and the timeliness of data reported. Work was underway to track data in a more timely way and assurances were given that the service was 'inspection ready'.

ILSC made two recommendations:-

- That the Deputy Leader explores if further measures could be taken to identify Council apprenticeship opportunities for young people involved in the youth justice system and engage the wider business community in similar initiatives such as job fayres.
- That the involvement of service users in offering awareness raising in schools and/or peer support to other young offenders or those at risk of offending, be explored.

❖ Persistent Absence from School - Workshop

There has been a greater focus on education related matters in this year's work programme, with reports covering issues such as elective home education and children missing from education. Following concerns about levels of persistent absence, a sub-group met to examine how the Early Help service was working with schools to address this issue. Members considered the new referral pathway which had been co-designed to ensure consistency in support and guidance to schools and parents prior to enforcement action being requested. The pathway was aligned to Rotherham's Continuum of Need to ensure that all children with additional needs are supported appropriately. Questions were asked about the escalation process and how this is applied fairly to ensure that requests for enforcement were submitted only when there was clear evidence that all strategies to support attendance and wider social and emotional wellbeing had been exhausted.

The new pathway was introduced early in the Autumn term and has been received positively by schools. Improving Lives agreed to review its implementation in summer 2020 to monitor how well it has been embedded and to share feedback and learning on the approach.

Coming Up

- ❖ 2019 Education Performance Outcomes
- ❖ Implementation of Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy
- ❖ Children and Young People's Services Directorate Workforce Strategy

Improving Places Select Commission

❖ Allotments Self-Management

It was agreed in July 2018 to adopt a new vision and specification for allotments in which the Council would approve the transfer of Council-owned allotments to a new borough wide self-management body and establish a Community Benefit Society for this purpose. Since then significant background work has taken place between officers and the Rotherham and District Allotment Association to develop a new business model and form a Board of Directors. The transfer of the management responsibility for allotments to the Rotherham Allotment Alliance (RAA) was scheduled to take place in January 2020, subject to some final formalities.

Allotment rules had been adapted from existing Council guidelines and those issued by the National Allotment Society; these promoted what was allowed on sites and also gave guidance on how to be a good neighbour to local housing and amenities. Although management of the allotments would be undertaken by the RAA, the Council still retained ownership of the sites and statutory responsibility for provision of allotments. No additional administrative burden was anticipated on either self-managed sites or for individual tenants. Assurance was given that the RAA had obtained public liability insurance and that the Board of Directors was monitoring progress and ensuring due diligence was in place. A further update will be reported to IPSC in December 2020 following the transfer of the allotment to the RAA.

❖ Traffic Impact from Waleswood Caravan Park

Waleswood Caravan and Camping Site opened in April 2019 and is accessed by vehicular traffic from Delves Lane which leads from the signalised junction of Wales Bar crossroads. The Transportation Infrastructure Service were asked to provide information on any impact arising from the development on the local road network.

A review of complaints, correspondence, observations of the local road network and assessment of the traffic signal timings at Wales Bar Crossroads had not identified any negative impact on the local highway network as a consequence of Waleswood Caravan and Camping Site becoming operational. Details of road traffic incidents in the locality had also been monitored and IPSC were advised that the opening of the caravan park had not had a significant impact.

A small number of formal requests had been received from residents requesting a reduction in the existing National Speed Limit and a review will be programmed in during 2020 to determine whether a lower speed limit is required. Members noted that the opening of the Gulliver's development could create a greater impact on the local areas and it was clarified that a further survey would be undertaken once the development was opened. IPSC requested a follow up report outlining the impact of the Waleswood developments on residents and an assessment of noise levels and traffic/congestion.

❖ Response to Issues from Workshop on Council Plan Performance Indicators

In the new approach to scrutiny of the performance measures in the Council Plan, the focus is on exception reporting based around red rated measures or ones with a negative direction of travel. IPSC had identified a small number of measures that met the agreed criteria for exception reporting and these were scrutinised at OSMB on 2 October 2019. The outcomes from scrutiny at OSMB were then reported back to IPSC. Queries had emerged about other measures in the Council Plan at the workshop and responses to these questions were also submitted to IPSC.

Overview and Scrutiny Update

❖ Area Housing Panels Review – Workshop

On 24 October 2019 a sub-group of IPSC undertook a focused workshop to consider the emerging proposals for Area Housing Panels from 2020-21. An overview of the following issues was provided to introduce the session:-

- Focus of the review and response to the consultation.
- Future tenant engagement - the aim was to move towards a more agile way of engagement, one easily recognisable to tenants whilst reflecting ward needs.
- Three Ward pilots testing different ways of working began in September 2019.
- Future budget arrangements
- Proposal to roll forward unspent budget (within a four year cycle).
- Budget and project governance - scope to align/match fund from other sources.

The sub-group explored a number of themes and sought further clarification regarding the detail behind some of the emerging proposals. Steps to encourage people's involvement, particularly where there had been low engagement previously, or a struggle to identify projects or spend money, were emphasised. Similarly with means to engage with greater numbers of tenants. Other areas of focus were on ensuring flexibility in the ways to bid for funding and to reflect individual ward needs; clarifying the role of Elected Members; the approval process for projects and ensuring these aligned with ward priorities. Development of customer access, recognising that digital technology was not appropriate for all, was also touched upon.

Clarity was sought in relation to budgets and areas of spend. This would be project specific and funding for smaller scale projects could generally be accommodated within the Ward Housing budget, but larger scale projects would have to be funded through the Housing Capital Programme. Funding would be adjusted annually to reflect housing stock numbers in a ward.

Members were assured by the emerging proposals to disestablish the existing Area Housing Panels at the end of the 2019-20 financial year and replace these with 25 Ward Housing Hubs. The Housing Hubs would have an annual base budget of £4,000 per ward, with the remainder of the annual budget provision being allocated to wards, based upon the percentage of Council homes within each ward, which was funded from the Housing Revenue Account. The recommendations from the workshop were presented at OSMB, as seen earlier.

❖ Dignity - Performance Update and Evaluation of Extended Hours Pilot for Burials

Performance

Following scrutiny of the Annual Report from Dignity at its meeting in June, IPSC received a progress update in December on the measures that had been rated as red or amber. Progress had continued during 2019 with only two measures/targets still rated as red and of the five measures rated as amber, three had progressed and there were plans for the other two but no definite timescales. Regarding provision of environmentally friendly burial options, a consultation exercise would be required to assess likely take up. This would be scheduled into the action plan for 2020, although the current focus was on expansion of cemeteries, where additional burial space was most required. In relation to secure storage for registers and records, Dignity had allocated funding for a safe and identified a supplier, with delivery dates pending. Repair work was underway to the wall at Maltby Cemetery and to Haugh Road Cemetery Gates.

Overview and Scrutiny Update

Pilot

Between April and September 2019, the Council and Dignity trialled a new 'out of hours' service to enable short notice burials after 3pm in Rotherham. The pilot aimed to make a reasonable adjustment to the bereavement service to address concerns raised by the Muslim community and to improve the offer to other service users who wished to have a burial up until 6.30pm at East Herringthorpe cemetery.

The pilot was largely successful, particularly in relation to better delivery of the Council's commitment to the Public Sector Equality duty. 77% of respondents considered the pilot made a reasonable adjustment to meet community, religious and cultural needs and 71% viewed it as having a positive impact on community relations. Further research was deemed necessary on a number of issues - likely speed and volume of growth in demand in future; fees charged for burials between 5pm and 6:30pm; and how to manage the impact of the registration process on staff delivering the service. The findings would be given further consideration by the internal working group at its next meeting in January 2020, followed by a meeting with Dignity in February before any final decision was made on future out of hours provision. The Chair requested that the decision and implications be reported back.

Clarification was sought by Members regarding out of hours fees as there seemed to be contradictory information. The out of hours fee had always been in place for bank holidays and weekends and had not changed but was more apparent as it applied from 5-6:30pm. This would be looked at as part of the benchmarking work.

A question was raised as to whether there was a way of trying to facilitate information sharing more directly between the hospital, Coroner, Registrars and Dignity rather than through the family. It was confirmed new processes were being introduced from April 2020 between the hospital and Registrars, who were working with the Medical Examiner (ME) on out of hours provision and thus the link with the hospital would come naturally. Officers were working on a process guide as certain things on a death certificate do have a longer process and this would help people in this very difficult period. IPSC requested feedback from the meeting with the ME.

Members explored other issues including availability of data on take up of the pilot from people outside Rotherham centre; progress in addressing the issue with waterlogging on one site; lengths of graves and pathways between them; and the possibility of allowing use of wooden kerb sets in the future. Officers agreed that a site visit to East Herringthorpe to see the planned expansion site for burials could be accommodated.

Other activity

❖ Visit to RotherFed

Members of IPSC attended a meeting to learn about proposals for the next Tenant Scrutiny Review which will focus on Aids and Adaptations. An update on progress with the action plan resulting from the previous Tenant Scrutiny Investigation into the process for dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints was also discussed.

Coming Up

- ❖ Review of Response to 2019 Floods
- ❖ Plans for Flooding Alleviation
- ❖ Major Incident Plan